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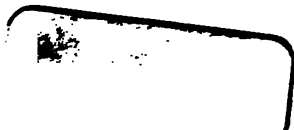
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CHARLES AND CARELESS HIDING IN THE OAK.

BOSCOBEL;

OR,

THE ROYAL OAK.

A TALE OF THE YEAR 1651.

BY

WILLIAM HARRISON AINSWORTH.

Illustrated by J. H. Kimbault.

In that fair part where the rich Salop gains
An ample view o'er all the Western plains,
A grove appears which BOSCOBEL they name,
Not known to maps; a grove of scanty fame.
And yet henceforth no celebrated shade
Of all the British groves shall be more glorious made.
COWLEY'S *Sylvæ*. Book VI.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



LONDON :

TINSLEY BROTHERS, 18, CATHERINE STREET, STRAND.

1872.

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BOSCOBEL;
OR,
THE ROYAL OAK.

Book the First.
THE BATTLE OF WORCESTER.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HOW THE BATTERY ON PERRY WOOD WAS TAKEN BY THE KING.

THE king was not present during any part of the disastrous conflict just described. On arriving at Powick Bridge with his attendants, he found Montgomery and Keith at their post, and confident of their ability to maintain it. No reinforcements had been sent, as yet, by Dalzell,

but doubtless they would soon arrive, and Montgomery declared he did not require them.

Continuous firing having been for some time heard in the direction of the Severn, Montgomery, in obedience to his majesty's command, was about to detach a party of men to support Pitscottie, when a Highland soldier arrived in breathless haste bringing intelligence that his leader had been routed by the enemy. Charles could scarcely credit the news, but on ascertaining the full extent of the disaster, he felt the necessity of immediately returning to the city, and preparing against an attack on the south, which might now be expected.

He therefore rode back with his attendants, crossed the river at the palace-ferry, and at once proceeded to the Sidbury-gate, where he found the Duke of Hamilton. From the watch posted on the summit of the cathedral tower, the duke had already heard of Pitscottie's defeat and the construction of the flying bridge across the Teme. He did not for a moment attempt to disguise the perilous position in which his majesty would be placed if Montgomery should be worsted at Powick, and

coincided with the king in opinion that the general attack should not be delayed, but advised that a visit should first be paid to Lesley, whom he had not as yet seen that morning.

Acting upon this counsel, Charles, attended by the Earl of Derby, Lord Wilmot, Carcless, and a small escort, rode to the Blockhouse fields, where Lesley was stationed with his Scottish horse. He found him with the whole of his large force under arms, and apparently ready for action. But he could not help noticing that Lesley looked exceedingly grave, and not altogether free from uneasiness.

"Is this man really the traitor he is generally thought?" mentally ejaculated Charles. "I will try him. Colonel Lesley," he cried, as he rode up, "I am resolved to take yon battery on Perry Wood. Bid your men prepare for the attack. I shall lead them in person."

On receiving this command, Lesley immediately drew near the king, and said, in a low voice:

"I beseech you not to call upon them to make the attack, sire. They will not follow you."

"Not follow me!" exclaimed Charles, fiercely.
"Lesley, you are a traitor!"

"I have already told you, sire," replied Lesley, in the same low voice, "that the men are not to be relied on. They will not fight with your Cavaliers."

"What will they do, then?" demanded Charles, sternly. "Will they utterly desert me in my hour of need? Will they deliver me to the enemy?"

"No, sire; but if, in obedience to your commands, I order them to attack yon battery, not one of them will stir."

Just then the roar of artillery was heard. The battery had opened fire on Fort Royal, and was immediately answered—as we have already described—by the Royalist engineers. The din was heightened by the smaller ordnance of the Block-house, which now began to operate—though with little effect—against Cromwell's intrenchments.

"Can you hear this, and stand tamely by?" observed Charles, reproachfully, to Lesley.

"I cannot help it, my liege," was the Scottish leader's answer. "My men are mutinous and will not obey me. Look at them now, and you will

be convinced that I speak the truth. But do not, I entreat you, compel me to put their disloyalty to the proof."

Charles cast his eye along the line nearest him, and the sullen and discontented aspect of the men fully confirmed Lesley's assertion.

The Earl of Derby had likewise taken a rapid survey of the regiment, and came to a like conclusion.

"A mutinous spirit evidently prevails among the men," he said to the king, "and may break out at once, if an attempt is made to force them into action. Leave Lesley to manage them. He can do it, if he will."

"'Tis the confounded Kirk committee that has been at work with them," cried Charles. "Lesley," he added, in a low significant tone to the Scottish leader, "you will gain nothing by deserting me; but much—very much—by standing firmly by me at this critical juncture."

"My liege," said Lesley, earnestly, "if you are in jeopardy, I will bring you aid. I cannot promise more."

Obliged to be content with this, Charles rode

off with his attendants and escort, and regardless of the enemy's fire, which was now extending along the heights and increasing in fury, proceeded to visit his various outposts.

Very little impression was produced upon Fort Royal by the heavy cannonade directed against it from Perry Wood, nor was any immediate attempt made by the enemy to storm it.

Lilburn and Lord Grey of Groby gradually drew closer to the Royalist outposts, but seemed to be awaiting the Lord General's signal for the grand attack. And such, in reality, was the case. From the apparent inertness of the enemy it was erroneously supposed by the Royalists that most of the Parliamentary troops had been drawn to the other side of the Severn. Cromwell, however, had a motive for all he did, and if he delayed the attack, it was because he deemed the right moment for making it had not arrived.

Never was he more cheerful than he appeared to be throughout this trying day. Confident of victory, he yet kept a watchful look-out upon the enemy, and seemed surprised that the attack, which he expected the king to make upon him, should

be so long delayed. For this attack, come when it might, he was fully prepared; but as evening began to draw on, and no movement was made by the royal forces, he grew impatient.

"Time will scarcely be allowed us for the work," he said to the officers with him, "yet will I not move till I have full assurance that Fleetwood and Ingoldsby are masters of St. John's, and ready to enter the city."

At this moment a messenger rode up bringing the intelligence he so eagerly desired.

Montgomery was utterly routed—Keith a prisoner—Dalyell had surrendered. Fleetwood and Ingoldsby were preparing to cross the bridge, and enter the city. Lambert was marching towards the bridge of boats, and would soon bring his regiment to Perry Wood. Such was the sum of the despatch. The messenger had to take a circuitous route, or it would have been delivered sooner.

Cromwell could not conceal his satisfaction.

"The Lord of Hosts is with us," he exclaimed. "His holy arm hath gotten us the victory. Nothing remains but to finish the work so well begun. On this day twelvemonth, at Dunbar, the word was,

‘The Lord of Hosts.’ So let it be to-day. The signal then was, ‘We have no white about us.’ The same signal shall serve now. Make this known throughout the regiments, and then prepare for action.”

While issuing these orders, Cromwell had noticed a movement at the Sidbury-gate, and now fixing his field-glass upon the spot he perceived that the main body of the royal army, horse and foot, was coming forth from the gate, evidently for the purpose of attacking him. He was at no loss to discover that the host was commanded by the king in person, and that Charles was attended by several of his most distinguished nobles. Indeed, from a closer survey, he felt certain that the Dukes of Hamilton and Buckingham were with him.

It was a splendid sight to see that gallant host issue forth from the gate, and familiar as he was with such spectacles, Cromwell watched it for some minutes with great interest—noting the strength of each regiment, and making many shrewd observations to his own officers.

“Charles Stuart hath come forth in all his bravery,” he said. “But he and all his host shall

be utterly discomfited. Up, and smite them. Spare none of the malignants. As to their prince, take him not captive, but slay him without pity."

Many circumstances had conspired to prevent Charles from making the attack he had meditated upon the enemy until so late in the day. But when he learnt that Dalzell had surrendered he no longer hesitated, but marched forth as we have just described. He was accompanied by the Dukes of Buckingham and Hamilton, the Earl of Derby, Lord Wilmot, Sir Alexander Forbes, and several other distinguished personages, and had with him his best infantry and cavalry, and his bravest Cavaliers.

The command of the right wing was given to the Duke of Hamilton, that of the left to the Earl of Derby, with whom was Colonel Roscarrock, while he himself commanded the centre. Perry Wood was to be attacked on either side, while a charge was made on the battery.

The plan was executed with remarkable quickness and precision. No sooner were the men formed than a general charge was made on Perry Wood, each division taking its appointed course.

Such was the impetuosity of the Cavaliers who formed the central body led by the king, that they drove back Cromwell's body-guard who rode down the hill to meet them, and rushing on with irresistible fury broke through the pickets, forced the intrenchments, and putting the artillerymen to the sword, actually obtained possession of the enemy's largest guns.

For a brief space Charles, who had led this wonderful charge—the most brilliant feat performed at the fight of Worcester—seemed master of the position. He was on the very spot just occupied by Cromwell himself, and had taken his guns. The valiant Cavaliers who attended their sovereign raised a shout of triumph, and struck the cannon with their swords.

With the king were Colonel Legge, Colonel Lane, Captain Giffard, Colonel Blague, Marquess Darcy, Wogan, and Careless. They had ridden close behind him, and had shared every danger he incurred. Colonel Legge, indeed, had saved the king's life. It was a singular sight to see the royal party on the top of the hill in the midst of the Parliamentary forces. But their

position seemed scarcely tenable, though Hamilton and Derby were pressing on, on either side, to their aid.

Nevertheless, Charles exulted in his brief triumph, and his exultation was shared by his companions. The hitherto invincible Ironclads had retreated before him, and were still in confusion and disorder, while both Hamilton and Derby, animated by the king's success, were driving all before them. Moreover, a most important result had been obtained by the capture of the guns. Fort Royal, which had suffered considerably from the ceaseless cannonade of the battery, was now left unmolested.

At this critical juncture, when his fate hung in the balance, and when the Scottish horse might have helped him to victory, Charles looked anxiously down to the spot where Lesley was posted. He was still there with his troops. But they remained motionless, although their leader must have been aware of the king's success, and must have felt how important aid would be at that moment.

"Does he move?—is he coming?" cried Charles.

"No, sire," rejoined Legge, straining his eyes in the direction of the Scottish cavalry. "He does not stir. Curses on him for a traitor."

"Oh, that Montrose were alive and in his place!" ejaculated Charles, bitterly. "He would not have served me thus!"

"No, sire," observed Careless. "Montrose would have secured you the victory."

It may be that the battle of Worcester was lost by Charles, owing to Lesley's inaction or treachery. If the king's extraordinary success could have been at once followed up, victory might have ensued. Who shall say?

CHAPTER XXIX.

HOW THE BATTLE OF WORCESTER WAS LOST BY THE KING.

CROMWELL was somewhat disconcerted by the unlooked-for advantage gained by Charles, but he quickly brought his disordered troops to their ranks, and prepared to bring forward his reserves. Like Charles, he looked down to the Blockhouse fields to see what Lesley would do, but was speedily reassured by finding the Scottish horse remain motionless.

"The men of Sechem have dealt treacherously with Abimelech," he said, with a stern smile. "Had Lesley come to his master's aid in time, he might have given me some trouble."

!

Detaching troops on either side to prevent a junction between the three parties of Royalists, he himself made a determined attack on the king.

The onset was terrible, but Charles and his Cavaliers bore it firmly, and maintained their ground, giving abundant proofs of valour, and showing of what stout stuff they were made, since they could thus resist the attack of Cromwell's veteran troops.

The conflict lasted for a considerable time—much longer, indeed, than Cromwell expected—but when Lambert arrived with his troops it became too unequal, and the Cavaliers were forced to give way. Besides, their ammunition was completely exhausted, and they were obliged to fight with the butt-ends of their muskets. After a most obstinate but ineffectual resistance, they retreated in disorder towards the city.

No junction had taken place between the battalions under the Duke of Hamilton and the Earl of Derby, but neither of these leaders were more successful than the king, though both fought valiantly. The Duke of Hamilton routed a troop of horse, but in a subsequent encounter his horse

was shot under him, and he himself was so severely wounded, that he had to be taken from the field, and was conveyed to the Commandery. Sir John Douglas was likewise mortally wounded, and Sir Alexander Forbes, disabled by a shot through both legs, was left in this lamentable condition in Perry Wood during the whole night. Next day he was discovered by the enemy and taken prisoner. Both the Earl of Derby and Roscarrock escaped unhurt, but the battalion commanded by the earl was routed after a gallant fight.

Overpowered on all sides, the Royalists, after sustaining fearful loss, were compelled to retreat into the city. Lesley, who had taken no part whatever in the fight, finding that the day had gone against the king, moved his regiment towards Barbourne Bridge, about a mile on the north of the city, and close to Pitchcroft.

No sooner did Cromwell's engineers regain possession of the great guns than they began to cannonade Fort Royal with redoubled fury. Under this tremendous fire a strong storming party was detached to take the fort, with orders from the Lord General to put all the troops within it to the

sword unless they surrendered. The barbarous order was executed. The fort being carried by storm after an obstinate resistance, no quarter was given to its brave defenders. The guns of the fort were then turned upon the city, and being so close to it, caused terrible havoc, and drove all the artillerymen from the walls.

But we must now return to the king. So long as a chance was left him, Charles fought valiantly, and during the retreat, though he failed to rally his disordered troops, he turned several times to face the enemy.

While thus braving the foe for the last time he was left alone, none of his attendants being aware that he had stopped. From the richness of his accoutrements he was at once recognised, and fierce cries were raised:

“’Tis Charles Stuart!—’tis Jeroboam! The Lord has delivered him into our hands! Slay him—slay him!”

Several pistols were discharged at him, but though the bullets struck his armour, no injury was done him. Most luckily his horse was not hurt, but bore him swiftly and safely to the Sid-

bury-gate. He was hotly pursued by the Round-head troopers, who would assuredly have cut him down, according to Cromwell's order, if they had come up with him.

On reaching the Sidbury-gate he found, to his dismay, that it was blocked up by an ammunition waggon, which had been overturned there either by accident or design. One of the oxen that had drawn the waggon was killed on the spot.

Without a moment's hesitation, the king threw himself from his horse, and contrived to creep past the waggon. As he entered Sidbury-street, Mr. William Bagnal, a staunch loyalist, who dwelt in that quarter, rode towards him, and, instantly dismounting, offered him his horse. The steed, thus opportunely provided for his majesty, was of infinite service to him in the day, as will be shown.

Once more on horseback, Charles rode up to the High-street, and found it full of soldiers, most of them belonging to the Scottish infantry. They had all a most dejected look, and on seeing him, many of them threw down their arms, to intimate their refusal to fight any longer. In vain he rode up and down their ranks, with his feathered hat

in his hand, addressing them with a passionate eloquence that ought to have roused them.

“Stand to your arms!” he cried. “Fight like men, and we shall yet conquer. Follow me, and I will lead you to victory. Ours is the right cause, and truth and justice must prevail in the end. Follow your king!”

Finding, however, that they would not stir, he called out in accents of bitter reproach, “Recreants that you are to desert me thus. If you will not fight, turn your arms against me. I had rather you would shoot me than let me live to see the consequences of this fatal day.”

He then rode slowly off towards the College Green, still hoping some might follow him, but none stirred.

CHAPTER XXX.

HOW THE ENEMY ENTERED THE CITY, AND HOW THE KING
QUITTED IT.

MEANWHILE, a sharp conflict was taking place outside the Sidbury-gate between a party of flying Royalists and a troop of horse under Colonel Pride. The unlucky Royalists were unable to enter the city owing to the obstacle before mentioned, and, after a short struggle, were slain to a man in front of the gate.

The ammunition waggon being removed, a regiment of infantry rushed in through the Sidbury-gate, and encountering no opposition, the men spread themselves through the lower streets of the city, and commenced plundering the houses.

The loyal city was now paying the penalty of its devotion to the king. Terror and confusion reigned everywhere. Doors were burst open, and the most horrible threats were answered by shrieks and cries for pity, but no pity was shown by the ferocious soldiery.

By this time Fort Royal had been stormed, as we have already related, and its guns being turned upon the city, the destruction caused in various parts by the shot heightened the terror of the inhabitants. Desperate fighting was going on in all quarters, and nothing was heard but the clash of steel, the sharp ring of musketry, and the roar of artillery, mingled with shouts and cries.

Fleetwood and Ingoldsby had now forced their way across the bridge, but their entrance into the city was furiously opposed by such forces as could be rallied by Lord Wilmot, Colonel Blague, Colonel Lane, and others, but the contest was too unequal, and could not be long sustained.

As both horse and foot were now continually pouring into the city on all sides, conflicts were taking place in almost every street. There was desperate fighting on the west as well as on the

east. There was fighting on the quay—in Newport-street and Dolday—near All Saints' Church—and in Broad-street. There was no fighting near the Cross—for the Foregate, as already mentioned, had been walled up—and, indeed, the enemy chiefly entered the city from the Sidbury-gate, from Friars'-gate, and from the bridge. But there was a great deal of fighting in Friars'-street, Lich-street, and multitudes of armed citizens and artillerymen who had been driven from the walls were running about in different directions. Hundreds of these were killed, for quarter was given to none with arms in their hands, and the streets were full of dead bodies.

The Scottish infantry tamely surrendered, and were shut up in the cathedral. They had better have died valiantly, for they were afterwards sold as slaves to the plantations. But other Scottish regiments behaved with the greatest resolution, and if all had done equally well, the result of the day might have been different. Castle Hill, as we know, had been strongly fortified, and was held by the Earl of Rothes, Sir William Hamilton, and Colonel Drummond, with a party of brave and

loyal Scots. The fortress was attacked by Lambert and Harrison, but was so obstinately defended that its leaders were able to capitulate on advantageous terms.

Having thus endeavoured to describe the frightful condition to which the city was reduced by the entrance of the enemy, we will now return to Charles, whom we left proceeding in a most melancholy frame of mind, and wholly unattended, towards the College Green. So cast down was he at the moment that he scarcely took note of anything that was passing around him, when he was suddenly roused from his fit of despondency by seeing a large troop of horse issue from the college gates. It was a party of Cavaliers headed by the Earl of Derby, Lord Cleveland, Colonel Roscarrock, Colonel Wogan, and Careless, and on making this discovery he immediately rode up, and was welcomed with the greatest delight by the Earl of Derby, as well as by his faithful attendant Careless. The greatest uneasiness had been felt for his safety, and it was feared he might have fallen into the hands of the enemy. Nor were the Cavaliers composing the troop less delighted, and

their enthusiasm quickly raised his drooping spirits. He put himself at their head, and, despite the entreaties of the Earl of Derby that he would seek safety in flight, he led them towards the Sidbury-gate.

But they had scarcely descended Lich-street when Colonel Pride's regiment of horse was seen advancing, and an instant onset upon it was made. As on all previous occasions, the first advantage was with the Cavaliers, but Pride and his men were not to be driven back. As soon as it was discovered that Charles was with the party, an attempt was made by Pride to capture him, and it would have been successful if Careless had not flown to his rescue.

The Cavaliers still made a desperate struggle, but it was evident they could not hold out long. Charles, who had been left for a few minutes in the rear after his rescue, was again about to place himself at their head, but Careless earnestly besought him to fly.

"The day is lost, my liege—utterly lost!" exclaimed this faithful attendant. "Save yourself, while there is yet time. We can hold out long

enough to cover your escape. Fly, I entreat you."

"No. I cannot—will not—abandon my faithful followers," cried Charles.

"Your presence unnerves us, my liege," implored Careless. "See you not that the enemy is resolved to capture you, or slay you. Balk his design by instant flight. We will prevent all pursuit till you are safe. Quit the city by St. Martin's-gate. 'Tis the only safe outlet. Ride on to Barbourne Bridge, where those of us who are left alive will join you when all is over here."

Charles yielded to these entreaties, though with the greatest reluctance, and Careless rushed to the front. Captain Woolfe and Vosper chanced to be near the king at the time, and he ordered them to follow him. Divining his intentions, they instantly obeyed.

On the way to St. Martin's-gate, he had to pass the ancient mansion which he had latterly made his private quarters, and wishing to enter it for a moment to take off the heaviest part of his armour, which might incommode him during his flight, and possess himself of some valuables he had left behind,

he dismounted, and giving his steed to Vosper, entered the house.

His imprudence in doing so had well-nigh led to his capture. He did not imagine that his flight had been discovered by the enemy, but he was mistaken. Quick eyes had been upon him at the time. Colonel James, who had recovered from his wounds, was with the Parliamentarians, and seeing the king quit his adherents, guessed his purpose.

But for some minutes pursuit was impossible, owing to the obstinate resistance of the Cavaliers. At length, Colonel James, accompanied by a dozen dragoons, forced his way into New-street, and was galloping along it when he caught sight of Woolfe and Vosper with the king's horse. They instantly disappeared, but he had seen enough. He knew that Charles had made that old mansion his private quarters, and felt convinced he must be within it at the time.

Galloping up, he entered with half a dozen of his troopers, leaving the rest on guard outside. Luckily for Charles, his pursuers had neglected to secure a door that opened into the Corn Market. Before moving off, Woolfe and Vosper gave the

alarm. The king had already divested himself of his armour, and was prepared for flight. At the very moment that Colonel James and his troopers entered, he passed out at the back.

Not many persons were in the Corn Market at the time, and the few he encountered being staunch Royalists, would have protected him with their lives, rather than have betrayed him. Woolfe and Vosper were not in sight, but he learnt they had gone out by St. Martin's-gate.

Hurrying thither, he passed through the gate without interference—for the Parliamentarians had not yet placed a guard there—and in another instant was joined by his attendants, who brought him his horse.

Quickly mounting his steed, he galloped off in the direction of Barbourne Bridge. He was not pursued—false information being given to Colonel James, which led him to believe that the royal fugitive had not quitted the city.

After awhile Charles slackened his pace, but just then he heard the trampling of horse behind him, and fancying the enemy was on his track, was about to gallop on, when he discovered that

his fancied pursuers were a small party of his own cavalry. He then faced about, and as the troop drew nearer, found that at its head were the Duke of Buckingham and the Earl of Lauderdale. A painful meeting took place between the king and the two nobles. They were seeking safety in flight, and were rejoiced to find that his majesty had escaped.

Soon afterwards, several small parties of Royalists overtook them—no other route being open to the fugitives. Charles, therefore, had no lack of attendants.

On reaching Barbourne Bridge, to his great surprise, he found Lesley and his regiment of horse.

"Soh! you are here," he cried, furiously. "I sought for you in vain in the city. Your men must be fresh since they have taken no part in the fight. Come back with me at once and help me to retrieve the fortune of the day."

"Sire," replied Lesley, calmly, "the contest from the first has been hopeless, and your troops are now annihilated. It would be madness to return. I have been waiting for you here."

"Waiting for me?" exclaimed Charles.

"Ay, waiting for you, sire. I knew you would come this way, since none other is open to you. I am ready to conduct you to Scotland."

"But I will not return thither to be the slave I have been," cried Charles. "I will rather die in England."

"Humour him, my liege—humour him. He may be of use now," observed Buckingham, in a low tone.

"Your majesty has now no option," remarked Lesley, coldly. "You must go back to Scotland. I will insure you a safe retreat. 'Tis for that purpose I have reserved my troops."

"Say you so?" cried Charles. "Then I must needs go with you. But I must wait here for my friends."

"Your majesty will have to wait long ere some of them join you," said Lesley.

"At least they have not deserted me," rejoined the king.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE LAST STAND MADE BY THE ROYALISTS.

ONCE more we must enter the ill-fated city, which was now completely in the power of the enemy, though many a conflict was still going on within it. So inflamed with fury were the Cavaliers, that they fell upon the foot soldiers who had been plundering the houses, and were so much encumbered with booty that they could not defend themselves, and slew such numbers of them that Friars'-street was quite choked up with dead bodies. On neither side was quarter given.

"The hour of vengeance is come," shouted the fierce Cromwellians. "Slay the Amalekites. De-

stroy them utterly—so that they may never more rise against us.”

“Down with the rebellious sectaries!” cried the Cavaliers. “Spare them not. Kill them as you would wild beasts.”

Savage shouts like these were heard on all sides, proclaiming the deadly animosity of the combatants which could be satisfied with nothing but slaughter.

The last stand made by the Royalists was at the Guildhall, and a more gallant stand was never made, because success seemed out of the question.

A tolerably strong party of Cavaliers had been rallied by Careless, Sir Rowland Berkeley, Colonel Legge, Colonel Lane, and Captain Hornyold. They assembled, as we have said, in front of the Guildhall. With them were the Earl of Cleveland, Sir James Hamilton, Colonel Wogan, and some others. They were attacked on the left by Fleetwood, and on the right by Lambert, with whom was Cromwell in person. In the fierce conflict that ensued, many were slain, and many more taken prisoners, but all the leaders escaped, except Sir James Hamilton, who was severely wounded.

Finding the contest hopeless, and that they should soon be shut up within the city, without the possibility of escape, Careless and the others dashed down Pump-street, and made their way to St. Martin's-gate. Having thus got out of the city, they rode as quickly as they could to Barbourne Bridge, where they found the king.

Deprived of all its defenders, its bravest inhabitants slain, or made captive, the city was then delivered over to the rapacious and fanatical soldiery, who had obtained possession of it. On the frightful atrocities perpetrated during that night upon the wretched inhabitants by the barbarous hordes let loose upon them, we shall not dwell. Suffice it to say that the sack of Rome under the Constable de Bourbon scarcely exceeded the sack of Worcester in horror.

Imagination cannot conceive scenes more dreadful than actually occurred. No soldiers were ever more savage, more ruffianly, more merciless than the Parliamentary troops. Cromwell himself had left the city before the direst deeds were enacted, but he well knew what would happen. He did not expressly sanction pillage and rapine and all other

atrocious acts, but he did not forbid them, and, at all events, did not punish the offenders.

On that night, at the very time when the diabolical atrocities we have hinted at, but cannot describe—when outrages the most frightful were being committed by his soldiery, without the slightest interference from his officers, the Lord General wrote in these terms to the Parliament:

“ This hath been a very glorious mercy, and as stiff a contest for four or five hours as ever I have seen. Both your old forces and those new raised have behaved themselves with very great courage, and He that made them come out, made them willing to fight for you. The Lord God Almighty frame our hearts to real thankfulness for this, which is alone His doing.”

The darkest part of the picture was carefully kept out of sight, and nothing dwelt upon but the “ glorious mercy ” vouchsafed him and his forces. Yet no mercy was shown by the conquerors, on that dreadful night—the worst they ever had to endure—to the miserable inhabitants of faithful Worcester.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE CONSULTATION AT BARBOURNE BRIDGE, AND THE KING'S
FLIGHT.

WE left the king at Barbourne Bridge. By this time he had been joined by the Earl of Derby, the Earl of Lauderdale, the Lords Talbot and Wilmot, Colonel Roscarrock, Colonel Blague, Charles Giffard, and many other Cavaliers, and a consultation was held as to what course should be pursued. All were of opinion that the day was irretrievably lost, and this opinion was confirmed by the arrival of Careless and the others, who told how they had been worsted in the last desperate struggle at the Guildhall.

"More than half of this brave battalion are gone," exclaimed Careless. "The rest are dispersed, and will never be got together again. Such frightful havoc has been made among the citizens, who have been slain by hundreds by these ferocious Roundheads, that no more fighting men can be got together. All is lost! Your majesty's standard has been torn down everywhere, and replaced by the flag of the Commonwealth. From this spot you may see their hateful standard floating on the cathedral tower."

Overpowered by this ill news, Charles could make no reply.

"All we can now do for your majesty is to save you from these ravening wolves and regicides," cried the Earl of Derby, "and that, with Heaven's grace, we will do!"

"We will defend your majesty to the last," cried the Lords Talbot and Wilmot, and several others.

"Alas! how many are gone!" exclaimed Charles. "Brave Sir John Douglas dead—the Duke of Hamilton mortally wounded. Where is Lord

Sinclair?—where are others of my Scottish peers?—where is Sir James Hamilton?—where is Sir Alexander Forbes?”

“Sir James Hamilton is killed, my liege,” replied Careless. “Sir Alexander Forbes is badly hurt—perhaps dead. Several of the Scottish nobles have been taken prisoners in the city. But think not of them—think of your own safety. What will you do?”

“Make all haste to London,” replied the king. “By riding hard I shall arrive there before tidings of the battle can be received.”

“A good plan,” cried Lord Wilmot. “Your majesty has many staunch adherents in London.”

“I like not the plan,” cried the Duke of Buckingham. “If adopted, it will end in your majesty’s destruction. The moment your defeat is known, your adherents will fall from you, and you will be at the mercy of your enemies.”

Almost all the others concurred with the duke in opinion, and were strenuously opposed to the king’s plan.

"Nay, then," he exclaimed, "there is nothing for it but Scotland. I will go thither."

"Your majesty has decided right," observed Lesley.

"His approval is enough to make me change my mind," observed Charles, withdrawing to a short distance with the Earl of Derby.

"Go not to London, my liege, I entreat you," said the earl. "'Tis the most perilous and rash scheme you could adopt. You will have dangers enough to encounter in whatever direction you proceed, but London is most dangerous of all. That you will be quickly pursued, and a heavy price set on your head, is certain, for Cromwell's victory will be shorn of half its splendour if you escape him. In England your chance is lost. It grieves me to say so, but I cannot hide the truth. You cannot get another army together. To Scotland, I see, you like not to return. The sole alternative, therefore, is an escape to France."

"That is what I desire," replied Charles. "But where can I embark?"

"At Bristol, my liege, it may be—but that

must be for after consideration. Conceal yourself for a time, and no safer hiding-place can be found than Boscobel, where I myself took refuge."

At this moment Colonel Roscarrock came up.

"How say you, Roscarrock?" asked the king.

"Think you I should be safe at Boscobel?"

"I am sure of it, my liege," replied the other.

"Strange your majesty should put the question to me, seeing I was just about to counsel you to take refuge there."

"You have already described the house to me," observed Charles. "But can the occupants be trusted?"

"Perfectly," said the Earl of Derby. "Your majesty has no more faithful subjects than the Penderels of Boscobel. Charles Giffard is here. Will your majesty speak with him?"

"Not now," replied Charles. "I would not have it known that I am about to seek a place of concealment, and were I to confer with Charles Giffard just now, my design would be suspected. We have only one traitor here—but I must guard against indiscretion. How far is it to Boscobel?"

"Some six-and-twenty miles, my liege," replied Roscarrock. "Your horse looks fresh, and will take you there in a few hours, if we are not interrupted. We must go by Kidderminster and Stourbridge towards Wolverhampton."

"Lord Talbot is well acquainted with the country, and will serve as guide," observed the Earl of Derby. "He has a servant with him, who knows the whole district, and will be very useful."

The king now signed to Careless, and taking him apart, informed him of his design, but bade him say nothing about it, except to Lord Talbot, Lord Wilmot, Colonel Lane, Charles Giffard, and a few others. Careless entirely approved of the plan, for he was terribly alarmed for the king's safety.

The word being now given that every one must shift for himself, Sir Rowland Berkeley, Captain Hornyold, and several other county gentlemen took leave of the king with such warm expressions of unwavering devotion and loyalty as greatly touched his majesty. Lesley, with his

Scottish cavalry, took the direct road northward by Newport.

Escorted by some sixty Cavaliers, all well mounted and well armed, and accompanied by the Duke of Buckingham, the Earl of Derby, the Earl of Lauderdale, Lord Wilmot, Colonels Roscarrock, Lane, Blague, and Charles Giffard, and of course attended by Careless, the king started on his flight.

End of Book the First.

Book the Second.


WHITE LADIES.

CHAPTER I.

HOW CROMWELL VISITED THE DYING DUKE OF HAMILTON AT
THE COMMANDERY; AND WHAT PASSED BETWEEN THEM.

ON the morn after the battle, there was weeping and wailing in Worcester, for those lying slaughtered in the houses and streets. Everywhere heart-rending scenes occurred, but they excited no pity in the breasts of the savage foe. Believing they had performed a work of righteous vengeance, the stern sectaries felt no compunction for what they

had done. The city had been delivered to them. They had plundered the houses, slain all who opposed them, committed every possible atrocity, and were now searching for the malignants, who had sought refuge in cellars and other secret places. Many prisoners of importance were thus made. Among those placed under the custody of the marshal-general, and subsequently sent to the Tower, were the Earls of Cleveland, Rothes, and Kelly, with the Lords Sinclair and Grandison, General Massey, and the valiant Pitscottie. Some were too severely wounded to be moved. Sir James Hamilton, Sir Alexander Forbes, Sir John Douglas, and General Montgomery were dangerously hurt—while the Duke of Hamilton was lying at the Commandery, mortally wounded. Fanshawe, the king's private secretary, was captured, and treated with especial favour by Cromwell, who was desirous of winning him over, but he rejected the Lord General's overtures. The mayor and the sheriff were committed to custody and ordered to be tried at Chester. A vast number of other prisoners were made, whom it is needless to particularise.



But Cromwell had lost his chief prize. For some hours it was supposed—chiefly on Colonel James's representation—that the king was concealed within the city, and every precaution was taken to prevent his escape. But before morning assured intelligence was brought to the Lord General that Charles Stuart had unquestionably fled towards the north, accompanied by the Duke of Buckingham, the Earls of Derby and Lauderdale, and several others, and that Leslie, with his Scottish cavalry, had taken the same direction.

On receiving these tidings, Cromwell gave immediate orders that Lilburn, Fleetwood, and Harrison, each with a regiment of horse, should start in pursuit of the Royalist leaders. At the same time he especially enjoined Colonel James to follow on Charles Stuart's track, in case the Young Man should separate himself—as was not unlikely—from his attendants.

A Proclamation was likewise issued, promising a reward of One Thousand Pounds to any one who should discover the person of Charles Stuart—while the penalty of high treason was declared against

all those who should harbour or conceal him. Copies of this Proclamation were forthwith despatched by swift messengers to all towns near which it was deemed likely the fugitive monarch would pass.

Colonel James, with a detachment of horse, started at once for Stourport, while the three Republican generals, previously mentioned, prepared to follow the retreating Scottish cavalry. The companies of militia stationed at the various towns were ordered to keep strict watch, and arrest all fugitive soldiers and malignants. Moreover, they were enjoined to search the houses of all declared Royalists.

Several country gentlemen, resident in the neighbourhood of Worcester, and suspected of taking part in the conflict, were arrested on the night of the battle. Sir Rowland Berkeley had a narrow escape. On taking leave of Charles at Barbourne Bridge, as previously related, the brave Royalist turned towards his old mansion, Cotheridge, in a very dejected frame of mind. Not merely was he anxious for the king's safety, but for his own.

He felt that his peril was materially increased by the peculiar colour of the steed he had ridden throughout the day.

However, a plan of avoiding the danger occurred to him. Fortunately, he possessed a couple of piebald horses, and on arriving at Cotheridge he sent the steed he had been riding to a distant farm, and had the other piebald horse placed in the stable and covered with body-clothes. This done, he withdrew to his chamber, and prepared to play the part of a sick man.

Two hours later, Colonel Goff, with a detachment of dragoons, arrived at the old mansion and demanded to see its owner. He was told by the butler that Sir Rowland was extremely unwell and confined to his room, but the answer did not satisfy him.

“Lead me to your master instantly,” he said.

Attended by half a dozen dragoons, he then followed the butler up-stairs, and on entering Sir Rowland’s room found him in a loose robe and slippers, and presenting the appearance of an invalid.

"What means this intrusion on my privacy?" demanded the baronet.

"You affect surprise at my appearance, Sir Rowland," rejoined Goff; "but you can feel none. I arrest you as a traitor to the Commonwealth. You took part in the battle to-day, and fought with the malignants."

"You are mistaken, general," was the reply. "I am far too unwell to leave my room, and utterly unable to put on arms or sit a horse."

"Tut!" cried Goff, incredulously. "You were present in the fields near Powick, and, later on, in the fight within the city. I myself beheld you on both occasions—on a piebald horse."

"'Tis true I have a horse of that colour," replied Sir Rowland. "But you will find him in the stable, and his freshness will prove that I could not have ridden him as you state. Satisfy yourself, I pray you, general. If it should appear that I have deceived you, treat me as you list."

"Since you affirm this so roundly I will go see," observed Goff, somewhat staggered. "But you must not stir from this chamber."

"I have not the power to leave it," said Sir Rowland, feigning extreme debility.

Placing a guard at the door of the chamber, Goff then proceeded to the stable, where he found a handsome charger, which, being stripped of its covering, proved to be piebald in colour, and exactly resembled the steed he had seen. The freshness of the horse showed that he could not have been out during the day. Astounded at the sight, Goff made no further inquiries, but returned without his prey. As a declared enemy of the Commonwealth, however, Sir Rowland had subsequently to compound for his estate by the payment of two thousand pounds.

We must now repair to the Commandery, whither, as already related, the Duke of Hamilton was conveyed from the field of battle. His right leg had been shattered by a slug shot, and the injury was so severe that amputation of the limb was deemed absolutely necessary by the king's surgeon, Kincaid, who was in attendance upon him; but the duke would not submit to the operation. He had passed a night of almost intolerable agony, and was lying on a couch in the room

adjoining the great hall.* His countenance was livid and distorted; and a cloak was thrown over his lower limbs.

A word as to the dying hero. William, Duke of Hamilton, then in his thirty-fifth year, had succeeded his elder brother, James, who was beheaded for high treason in 1649. Of the large train of distinguished personages who accompanied Charles in his march from Scotland, none was more devoted to the royal cause—none more determinately hostile to the rebellious Parliament—than the Duke of Hamilton. Though despairing of success, the duke adhered firmly to the king to the last, and that he was as brave as loyal was proved by the prodigies of valour he performed on the battle-field at Worcester.

“The torture I endure is almost insupportable, Kincaid,” he groaned. “I could not suffer more from the rack.”

“No anodyne will assuage the pain, my lord

* The room in which the duke died is still intact. The Commandery is now used as a College for the Blind Sons of Gentlemen, the Rev. Mr. Blair being the Principal. The ancient structure bears evidence of the fray, and contains many relics of the period.

duke," replied the chirurgon. "As I have already represented to your grace, amputation of the shattered limb is the sole means of saving your life."

"I would rather die than lose the limb," groaned the duke. "'Tis not pain I dread, but disfigurement."

"The Lord General has signified his intention of sending his own surgeon, Trappam, to attend your grace. You will hear what he has to say."

"I will not suffer him to come near me," said the duke, sternly. "I will accept no favour from the regicide Cromwell."

As he spoke, the door communicating with the great hall was opened, and two persons came in. The foremost was Cromwell, the other was Trappam, the chirurgon. The Lord General was armed as he had been during the battle, and wore a broad-leaved hat, which he did not remove. Marching direct towards the couch on which the wounded man was stretched, he regarded him fixedly for a few moments, and then said, in not unkindly accents:

"I am sorry to find your grace so grievously

hurt. But it may be that the Lord will heal your wounds. Such aid as man can render will be afforded by my own surgeon, Master Trappam. He is very skilful, and has wrought many wondrous cures."

"I thank your excellency" rejoined the duke, raising himself, "but the king's surgeon is in attendance upon me, and I lack no other aid."

"Let them consult together," said Cromwell, "I would fain save your life, if I can."

"Wherefore save me?" observed the duke, sternly. "Would you bring me to the block, as you brought the duke, my brother?"

"The duke, your brother, was justly condemned as a traitor to the Commonwealth of England," rejoined Cromwell. "Perchance, your grace may be pardoned. My intercession shall not be wanting if you are disposed to agree to certain conditions."

"I know not what the conditions may be, but I reject them beforehand," rejoined the duke. "I will die as I have lived, a loyal subject of the king, and an enemy of his enemies?"

"Charles Stuart is a proscribed fugitive," said Cromwell. "Hitherto he has been king only in

name; now he has not even the name of king. My messengers are upon his track, and will assuredly find the lurking-place wherein he hideth."

"They will fail to take him," rejoined the duke. "It is written that he shall escape, and return to triumph."

"Where is it so written?" demanded Cromwell, scornfully.

"In the book of fate."

"You do not read the book aright, my lord duke. Were I to turn over its leaves, I should soon light on one in which his death on the scaffold is recorded."

"You will find no such record," rejoined the duke. "You have slain the king, his father, but him you shall not slay. His destiny is not in your hands."

"All things are in the Lord's hands," said Cromwell. "But would Heaven have vouchsafed me this crowning mercy if it had not meant——"

"That you should be king!" interrupted the duke. "Not so. Be not deceived. King you shall never be. Hitherto, the third of September has been propitious to you, but another anniver-

sary of that day shall come, and it will prove fatal."

Exhausted by the effort he had made in uttering these words, he sank backwards, and his countenance assumed the pallor of death.

Thinking he was gone, Cromwell called to the surgeons, who had retired to discuss the duke's case.

"While you are conferring together, your patient has expired," he cried.

"'Tis but a momentary faintness, your excellency," said Trappam. "But assuredly his grace will not live long, if he refuses to undergo the operation."

"Then let him die," cried Cromwell, sternly. "He will 'scape the scaffold." And without another word he quitted the room.

Continuing obstinate, the unfortunate Duke of Hamilton died of his wounds. Though he begged to be buried with his ancestors, at Hamilton, his dying wishes were disregarded, and he was interred before the high altar in Worcester Cathedral.

It was long before the city recovered from the terrible punishment inflicted upon it by the

exasperated Republicans. There can be no doubt that Cromwell entertained a strongly vindictive feeling towards Worcester, for the constant attachment it had manifested towards Charles I. and his son. To prevent the possibility of any further rising, he levelled the fortifications with the ground, destroyed the gates, and filled up the dykes. The work was done so effectually, that not a vestige is left of Fort Royal, while only here and there can a few remains of the old walls be discovered. Sidbury-gate is gone; so is the Foregate—so are almost all the memorials of the Battle.

Treated like a conquered city, ravaged, partially destroyed, all its wealthy inhabitants fined, many imprisoned as well as fined, some hanged, it could not be expected that Worcester, elastic as it has ever shown itself, should immediately rise again—nor did it recover until the Restoration.

Then the city became prosperous once more, and it has prospered ever since. If not so picturesque as of yore, it is much better built—at least, we are willing to think so. Most of the old timber houses and ancient edifices have dis-

appeared—but the Commandery is left. The noble cathedral is improved—both externally and internally. A very respectable structure of Queen Anne's time occupies the site of the old Guildhall. In short, it would be difficult to find in the whole realm a city that can vie with Worcester in cheerfulness, prosperity, or beauty of situation. Its inhabitants are as loyal as ever, and ready to fight the old battles o'er again.

FLOREAT SEMPER FIDELIS CIVITAS.

CHAPTER II.

HOW THE FUGITIVE KING AND HIS COMPANIONS RODE FROM
BARBOURNE BRIDGE TO WHITE LADIES.

MORE painful feelings were never experienced by a monarch than were those of Charles as he fled from Worcester on the evening of the battle. All was lost. The crown he hoped to win was gone. His life was in jeopardy, and after a vain attempt to escape, he might be placed in the hands of his enemies.

The cavalcade, as already mentioned, numbered about sixty persons of various ranks, but all devoted to the king, and prepared to defend him to the last. But it was the determination of the

leaders of the party to avoid any needless encounter. Having quitted the high road to Kidderminster, they were now speeding along the lanes skirting the left bank of the Severn, under the guidance of Lord Talbot's servant, Yates, and another man named Walker. Charles did not ride at the head of the troop, but with the Duke of Buckingham and the Earl of Derby brought up the rear. None of his attendants attempted to disturb the profound reverie into which the unfortunate king was plunged, and so engrossed was he by painful thoughts, that he scarcely seemed conscious of their presence.

It was a pleasant evening, and though the sun had already set behind the Malvern Hills, the heavens were filled with rosy clouds, which were reflected on the surface of the river. The troop passed by several farm-houses, but the scared occupants only watched them at a distance. Anxious glances were occasionally cast back by the fugitives to ascertain whether they were pursued, but no enemy appeared in sight. By degrees the calmness and beauty of the evening produced a soothing effect on the king's troubled mind. What

a contrast was offered between the peaceful lanes through which he was now riding and the city resounding with the din of arms, the roar of artillery, and frightful cries.

Having passed Beveré Green, and dashed through the ford of the Salwarp, at Hawford Mill, but without meeting interruption of any kind, they now pursued the Ombersley-road for some distance, but turned off at the Mitre Oak for Hartlebury, and halted at the Old Talbot Inn, where the king drank a cup of sack, while his attendants refreshed themselves with such liquors as they could procure.

Once more they were in motion, and a narrow by-road brought them to Hartlebury Common, then of great extent and dangerous in places, but as they could still see their way, they rode on without fear.

Nothing can be pleasanter, under certain circumstances, than a gallop across a wild heath at the twilight hour; but when danger lurks on every side, when the riders are flying for life—above all, when a king's safety is at stake, the sensations are not quite so agreeable. Deceived by the

gathering gloom, the fugitives are apt to suspect that the foe is lying in ambush for them, and to turn needlessly from their course. This was the case with the flying troop. They avoided Stourport because they fancied there was danger in that quarter, and shaped their rapid course past the dismantled manor-house of Hartlebury, which had been garrisoned by Charles I. during the Civil Wars. The ancient mansion might have afforded them shelter for the night, but they did not dare to stop there.

They were still on Hartlebury Common, and were soon close upon Kidderminster, but did not deem it prudent to enter the town. Skirting the valley in which it lies, and galloping past Hoo-brook, they proceeded by Chester-lane and Green Hill to Broadwaters. Thence up Black Hill to Sion Hill. Next traversing the beautiful woody district that now forms Lea Park, they descended a gentle acclivity that brought them to the old bridge across the Stour.

Had there been light enough to distinguish it, a charming scene would have been here presented to the king's gaze. But he crossed Hay Bridge

without looking at the beautifully winding river or at the precipitous rocks on its opposite bank, well satisfied that there was no enemy concealed amid the woods to dispute his passage.

By the time the troop reached Kinver Heath it had become quite dark, and the guides declared it was impossible to cross the wild and boggy waste at that hour.

Notwithstanding their representations, the king would have pushed on at all hazards, but the Earl of Derby, Charles Giffard, and Careless, who knew the heath, dissuaded him from his rash design. Lord Derby thought there would be far less danger in passing through Stourbridge, even if it should be occupied by militia, which was doubtful, than in attempting to traverse a morass in which they were almost certain to be engulfed.

"There are so many quagmires in Kinver Heath, that, even in daytime, it is difficult to avoid them," observed the earl. "At night it is impossible."

"I am entirely of his lordship's opinion," said Captain Giffard. "I know Kinver Heath well, and I implore your majesty not to risk your royal person upon it."

"Are you afraid to go with me?" asked Charles.

"'Tis my duty to prevent your majesty from rushing on certain destruction."

"Nay, then, if the danger is really so great, we must proceed to Stourbridge, despite the militia."

"The rascals will not be on the look-out for us, so we shall most likely escape them," remarked Careless. "Besides, if we are slain, we shall die like gentlemen. Any death is preferable to being stifled in a quagmire."

"As the hour is late, I do not think the enemy will be on the alert," observed the Earl of Derby. "But no precaution must be neglected. In the event of an attack, all of us who are near your majesty will speak French, so that your presence may not be suspected."

"'Tis well," replied Charles. "You hear, my lords and gentlemen, we are all to become Frenchmen when we reach Stourbridge."

The party then turned towards Stourton, and once more crossing the Stour by the Stewpony Bridge, galloped on towards Stourbridge. When within a quarter of a mile of the town they came

to a halt, and Careless and Captain Giffard were sent on to reconnoitre.

As Stourbridge at that time consisted only of one long street, it was easy to ascertain whether any soldiers were on the watch, but none could be discovered. The street was entirely deserted, all the inhabitants having, apparently, retired to rest.

Perfectly satisfied with their inspection, Careless and Giffard returned to the royal party, and informed his majesty that he might proceed without fear. Charles did not question the information he had received, but judging it safest to speed through the town, placed himself at the head of the troop, and galloped along the street.

Roused by the clatter of the horses' hoofs, several of the inhabitants rushed to the windows, and just caught sight of the flying cavalcade.

The Royalists, however, had not got far when a drum was loudly beaten "to arms," showing that Careless and Giffard had been deceived. It presently appeared that a company of militia was quartered at the further end of the town, and their steeds being ready saddled and bridled, the

men mounted and formed as quickly as they could in the street to check the fugitives.

But they did not succeed in their purpose. The king and his companions drew their swords, and dashed upon them with such impetuosity that they cut their way through the phalanx, and in another minute were out of the town. These soldiers of the militia, not being so well-seasoned as Cromwell's Ironclads, were staggered by the fierce and determined assault of the Cavaliers, and did not attempt pursuit. Charles and his party, therefore, galloped on as swiftly as they could for a mile or so, when the king slackened his pace.

"Is there an inn hereabouts?" asked the king.
"I am desperately thirsty."

"My liege, there is a solitary hostel between Wordsley and Kingswinford," replied Giffard.
"But I know not what can be obtained at it."

"A cup of cider or ale will serve my turn now," replied Charles.

"The White Horse is not so badly provided," remarked Careless. "Nat Coulter, the host, can brew as good a pottle of sack as any man in

Staffordshire, but I doubt if he can supply us all—even with ale. However, we shall see.”

On reaching the White Horse the fugitive Royalists found much better entertainment than might have been expected. Nat Coulter was in bed, but he was soon roused from his slumbers, and with his wife and his two sons set heartily to work to serve his unexpected guests. He had plenty of ale and cider, with which the Cavaliers were perfectly content, but only a single runlet of canary. However, this amply sufficed for the king and the chief personages with him. As to provisions, they ran rather short, Nat Coulter's larder not being very abundantly supplied, but the hungry Royalists devoured all they could find. Though Nat and his household were known to be loyal, Charles did not discover himself to them, but spoke French, and was addressed in that language by his attendants during his stay at the White Horse. Nat, however, being a shrewd fellow, afterwards declared that he had recognised the king.

A consultation was held in the little parlour of the inn. On quitting Barbourne Bridge, Charles,

as we have already stated, had decided upon seeking a refuge in Boscobel. He had not abandoned this design, though during the nocturnal ride his plans had undergone some change. It was now proposed that the king should proceed in the first instance to White Ladies, another secluded house belonging to the Giffards, about a mile distant from Boscobel, where arrangements could be made for his majesty's safety, and where he could separate from his companions. Both the Earl of Derby and Roscarrock agreed that this would be the best and safest course to pursue, and it was decided upon by his majesty.

Again mounting their steeds, which had been as well cared for in the interim as circumstances permitted, they rode on at a quick pace, tracking the woodlands in the neighbourhood of Himley, and obtaining glimpses of the extensive lake. No furnaces at that time bursting from the ground marred the sylvan beauty of the scene.

After passing Wombourn, the troop plunged into Brewood Forest, and were soon buried in its depths. Guided through the intricacies of the wood by Charles Giffard, who was now in his own

domain, and knew every roadway, they at last reached a little valley entirely surrounded by timber, in the midst of which stood an old-fashioned black and white timber mansion. Closely adjoining this ancient house, and almost appearing to form part of it, were the ivy-clad ruins of a monastery.

Day was just breaking at the time, and the picture presented to the king, and seen by the grey light of dawn, was inexpressibly striking.

"That is White Ladies, sire," said Charles Giffard. "There your majesty will find shelter."

CHAPTER III.

THE PENDEBELS.

IN Brewood Forest, which was situated on the boundaries of Shropshire and Staffordshire, and extended into both counties, two large monasteries had existed—one being a Cistercian priory, and the other Benedictine. It was from the ruined Cistercian priory, which had been founded by Hubert Walter, Archbishop of Canterbury, in the time of Richard Cœur-de-Lion, that the old mansion in which the fugitive king was about to take shelter derived its name. The house dated back to the period when the monastery was suppressed. It has now disappeared, but the ruins of the priory are

left, and consist of a massive wall and a few circular-headed windows. A doorway, with a fine Norman arch, leads to what was once the chapel, but is now a small place of sepulture.

Viewed in connexion with the old mansion, the ruins of the monastery produced a singularly beautiful effect—the strangely-secluded situation of the house adding to its charm. It seemed as though it were hidden from a world of strife and care, and as if none of the dire calamities of war, which those now gazing at it had so recently experienced, could disturb it. Fain would the weary Cavaliers who gazed at the peaceful old house have rested there. But rest, as they well knew, was not for them. Their toilsome and perilous journey was not yet over. With some of them the road they were about to take led to the scaffold.

White Ladies and the monastic ruins adjoining it were surrounded by a low wall, in the midst of which was an old gateway of the same date as the house. Around, as we have said, on every side, were woods, and it was these thick groves that gave to the place the peculiar air of seclusion that characterised it.

Praying the king to allow him to go forward, Captain Giffard rode towards the gateway, which was fastened, but he had not reached it, when a tall stalwart individual, clad in a leathern doublet, and having a woodman's knife stuck in his girdle, strode towards the garden wall. Charles watched this sturdy fellow as he advanced, and was very favourably impressed by his manly countenance.

The forester—for such he seemed—was armed with a wood-bill, which he had snatched up on perceiving the troop, but being quickly reassured on finding his young master with them, he flung down his weapon. After exchanging a few words with him, Captain Giffard bade the forester open the gate, and returned to the king.

“That's an honest fellow, I'll be sworn,” observed Charles, “and as brave as honest. He looked just now as if he would strike down the first man who attempted to enter.”

“And so he would, my liege, had we been rebels and Roundheads,” replied Giffard. “George Penderel has been a soldier, and served in your royal father's army at Edgehill, where his brother, Tom Penderel, was killed. He is now a wood-

ward, as are all his brothers, except Humphrey, the miller of Boscobel."

"If they are all like George, they must be a gallant set," remarked Charles. "Are there many of them?"

"Five living," remarked Giffard. "And George is a fair sample of the rest. They are all true men, stout of heart and strong of limb, as if made of their native oak. Above all, they are loyal to the core. It is to their care," he added, lowering his voice, "that I propose to confide your majesty. Lord Derby and Colonel Roscarrock will give you an assurance of their fidelity."

"They have already done so," replied Charles. "What ho! George Penderel," he exclaimed.

Hearing himself called, the stalwart forester, who had been standing near the open gate, instantly came forward, but on approaching the king, he stopped and doffed his cap.

"You know me, I perceive, George," said the king.

"I have never set eyes on your majesty before," rejoined the forester, "but I should know that royal countenance among a thousand."

"I hope some others who may chance to see me in these parts may not be gifted with thy discernment, honest George," replied Charles. "You have served the king, my father—now you must serve me."

"In the field, sire?" cried George, eagerly.

"Alack! my good fellow, I have no longer an army," remarked the king, sadly. "These are all the followers left me—and I must, perforce, part with them."

"But I will never leave your majesty unless you bid me," rejoined George.

"You have four brothers, ha?"

"All as trusty as myself. Your majesty will be safe with us. All the wealth of the kingdom should not tempt us to betray you."

"Enough," replied the king, dismounting—his bridle being held by George Penderel.

The principal personages composing the royal retinue dismounted at the same time, and followed his majesty into the house. By the direction of Captain Giffard all the horses were then taken into the interior of the ruined monastery, with the exception of the king's steed,

which was brought by George Penderel into the hall.

A search was next instituted for provisions, and in this quest Careless played a conspicuous part. Repairing to the kitchen, he there found Dame Penderel and a servant-maid, and the fire being fortunately lighted, he soon sent a large dish of fried eggs and bacon to the king, which was greatly enjoyed by his majesty and the nobles with him. Nor while he provided so well for the wants of others did the thoughtful major neglect his own, but contrived to make a very hearty breakfast in the kitchen. It must not be supposed that the rest of the troop, who were now in the ruined priory chapel, fared so well. Bread, biscuits, oat-cakes, and cheese were distributed among them, and they had plenty of sack.

Meanwhile Captain Giffard, who was all anxiety to make arrangements for the king's safety, had sent for Richard Penderel—commonly known as "Trusty Dick"—who dwelt at a cottage in the forest, called Hobbal Grange. William Penderel, the eldest brother, who resided at Boscobel, which was about a mile distant from White Ladies,

had likewise been sent for by the Earl of Derby.

Trusty Dick was first to arrive, and Charles was as well pleased with his looks as he had been with those of the younger brother. William was powerfully built, and quite as tall as George.

"His majesty has resolved to disguise himself, Dick," said Captain Giffard. "What sort of attire ought he to put on?"

"If his majesty will condescend to wear a suit of my clothes," said Richard Penderel, "I'll engage that not a rebel trooper among them all will recognise him. My best jerkin, leather doublet, and green trunk hose, will just fit you, sire, and I haven't worn them more than once or twice."

"The disguise will suit me exactly," cried Charles. "I will become a Brewood forester like thyself. We are about the same height, as I think, though thou hast the advantage of me in respect of bulk."

"Truly, I am somewhat clumsier than your majesty."

"Haste, and fetch the clothes, Dick, for I pre-

sume thou hast not got them with thee," said Captain Giffard.

"One thing more is needful to complete the disguise," said Richard Penderel. "I scarce like to mention it. Yet if it be neglected, all else will be marred."

"What is the indispensable matter?" asked Charles.

"Your majesty must consent to part with your long locks," replied Dick.

"Oddsfish! I had not thought of that," exclaimed the king. "But I see the necessity. Better lose my locks than my head. Go fetch the clothes."

Trusty Dick made a humble reverence and departed.

Not long afterwards, William Penderel of Boscobel made his appearance. He was the most remarkable of this remarkable brotherhood. All were tall—not one of them being under six feet in height—but William towered above the others by a couple of inches.

Although gigantic in stature, he was well proportioned, and possessed prodigious strength. His

features were cast in a massive mould, and though somewhat heavy, had the same honest expression that characterised the whole family.

On entering the house he found Lord Derby in the hall, and its appearance—filled as it was with Cavaliers, with the king's horse in the midst of them—satisfied him that some great disaster had occurred.

“Your lordship is welcome back,” he said, bowing reverently; “though I own I would rather not have seen you again so soon. Rumours of a terrible defeat at Worcester have reached us, I know not how.”

“Ill news, they say, travels quickly,” replied the earl, surprised; “but this news must have travelled through the air, if it has reached you before us, for we have ridden here direct from Worcester, and almost without stoppage.”

“Oh, my lord, messengers doubtless have galloped from post to post, and so have gotten before you. But tell me, I pray you,” he added, anxiously, “is the king safe?”

“The king is here,” replied the earl. “Come with me and you shall see him.”

So saying he opened the door of a parlour panelled with dark oak, and fitted up with oak furniture. Charles was seated in the room, and Lord Wilmot, Captain Giffard, and Careless were with him.

Without any prompting, the huge forester immediately prostrated himself before the king, who gave him his hand to kiss.

"This is William Penderel, sire," observed the earl.

"I do not need the information," replied Charles. "I am right glad to see thee, William. I have already seen two of thy brothers."

"Then your majesty has seen two of your loyal subjects," replied the forester, rising. "We will defend you to the death."

"William Penderel," said the Earl of Derby, in a voice well calculated to impress his hearer, "I know thy fidelity and worth, and have answered for thee and for thy brothers to the king's majesty. A sacred duty now devolves upon you, and take heed you perform it well. You will have the care of the king. He is surrounded by enemies—cunning as foxes in quest of prey.

Beware of their wiles and stratagems. Open foes may be guarded against—secret foes are most to be dreaded.”

“I and my brothers will strive to guard his majesty against all foes, open and secret,” replied William Penderel; “and with Heaven’s help I doubt not we shall accomplish his deliverance.”

“Help to conceal me—that is all I ask at present,” said the king.

“We have more than one hiding-place at Boscobel,” observed Penderel. “I can conceal his lordship as well as your majesty.”

“Mistake me not, William,” said the Earl of Derby. “I shall not tax thy services—nor will any other. Thou must look to the king alone.”

“I understand your lordship,” replied William Penderel; “and I promise you that my sole care shall be bestowed upon his majesty. But let me humbly counsel your lordship and those with you not to tarry here too long. A troop of militia under command of Colonel Bloundel is quartered at Codsall, which is not more than three miles off, and as soon as they receive news of the battle,

they will assuredly search all the houses herabouts."

"Thou art right," replied the earl. "We must not remain here long."

At that moment the Duke of Buckingham and Roscarrock entered the room.

"We have news for your majesty," said the duke; "news of Leslie."

"What of the traitor?" cried Charles, frowning.

"He has rallied with the whole of his cavalry on the heath near Tonge Castle," replied Buckingham. "A messenger has just arrived, saying that he waits there to conduct your majesty to Scotland."

"What number of men has he with him?" asked Charles.

"About three thousand, sire, so the messenger affirms," replied Roscarrock.

"Three thousand men might have turned the battle yesterday," said Charles, bitterly. "Let those go with the traitor who list, I will trust him no more. If he would not stand by me when I had an army at my command, of a surety he will not stand by me now that I have none."

The tone in which the king spoke showed that his resolution was taken. No one, therefore, attempted to dissuade him from his purpose.

"We must separate," he continued. "I shall seek safety in flight. Those who have faith in Leslie, can join him. I will not attempt to influence your decision. Retire, I pray you, and consult together."

All then left the room, with the exception of Careless, who remained with the king.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW CHARLES WAS DISGUISED AS A WOODMAN.

"MUST I, too, quit your majesty?" asked Careless.

"There is no help for it, Will," replied Charles. "My best chance of escape—the sole chance, in fact—lies in being left to myself. I shall be well served by these faithful Penderels."

"Of that you may rest assured, sire," said Careless. "Yet I still think I may be of some service to your majesty. At any rate, I shall not quit the neighbourhood of Brewood Forest, so that I may be readily found, if wanted. I know the country as well as the Penderels them-

selves. So unimportant a circumstance may easily have slipped from your majesty's memory, and I must therefore remind you that I was born at Bromhall, in Staffordshire, within three miles of White Ladies."

"Ah, I recollect!" cried Charles. "No wonder you are well acquainted with the district."

"I have not seen Bromhall for years," pursued Careless, "and few recollect me. Nevertheless, I can make myself at home there."

"Take my advice, and go not near the place," said Charles. "Of a certainty you will be discovered by the rebel troopers from Codsall. Since you are familiar with the forest, hide yourself within it, and join me at Boscobel. But now for my disguise. No one but yourself shall clip off my locks. Have you procured a pair of scissors from Dame Penderel?"

"Here they are, sire," replied Careless, producing them.

"Sdeath! they are like shears," exclaimed the king. "However, they will do the work more quickly. Have you aught to throw over my shoulders?"

"A towel borrowed from the good dame."

"That will do," replied Charles. "Now begin, and lose no time."

It required a desperate effort on Careless's part to commence, but in a few minutes he had cut off the long black locks on which the young monarch had justly prided himself.

"Have you done?" asked Charles.

"Be pleased to look at yourself in the glass, sire, and you will find your hair cropped as close as that of a Puritan."

Charles groaned on remarking the frightful change wrought in his personal appearance.

"Zounds! you have disfigured me most horribly," he cried.

"I have reluctantly obeyed your majesty's orders," replied Careless. "Here are love-locks enow for twenty fair dames," he added.

"Unluckily, there is not a single fair dame on whom to bestow them. Bid Dame Penderel burn them."

"Rather let me bid her keep them safely as a memorial for her children," rejoined Careless.

"As you will," said the king. "Now help me to take off my ornaments."

"Little did I think I should ever have this sad duty to perform, sire," observed Careless, as he knelt down to remove the garter from the king's knee.

"These are but badges of royalty, and can be easily replaced," said Charles. "A kingdom is not so easily got back."

With his attendant's aid he then divested himself of the blue riband, the George of diamonds, and all his ornaments.

"My watch has stopped," he remarked. "I have neglected to wind it up."

"It has been struck by a bullet," said Careless, examining it. "Look how deeply the case is dented, sire. This watch has saved your majesty's life."

"Then I will bestow it on the best friend I have," said the king. "Wear it for my sake, Will."

"I will wear it next my heart," was the fervent reply. "Your majesty could not have bestowed upon me a more precious gift."

Just then Lord Wilmot, Colonel Roscarrock, Colonel Blague, and some others, came in, and almost started back on seeing how strangely the king was metamorphosed.

"You see, gentlemen, to what a state I am reduced," he observed, with a sad smile. "I must commit these ornaments to your custody," he added.

"I hope we shall soon be able to restore them to your majesty," said Lord Wilmot, who received the George.

"What has been decided?" inquired Charles. "Do you all join Leslie?"

"The majority have so determined," replied Lord Wilmot. "But I shall take another course. Perhaps I may attempt to reach London. I shall not be far from your majesty," he added, in a low tone.

"What is to be done with your horse, my liege?" asked Colonel Lane. "Have you any further occasion for him?"

"None whatever," replied Charles. "If the horse should be found here, he might lead to my discovery."

"Then I will gladly take him, for my own steed is dead beaten," rejoined Colonel Lane.

The saddest moment was now at hand. The Duke of Buckingham, the Earl of Derby, and the other nobles came in to take leave of the king.

Charles was profoundly affected, and the nobles were overpowered by emotion. Very little was said by them, for their grief was too real and too deep to find expression in words. Ceremony was laid aside, and Charles embraced them all. With very gloomy forebodings they then left the room—Lord Derby being the last to retire.

"I trust we shall soon meet again, my dear lord," said Charles, as he stood beside him, with his arm upon the earl's shoulder.

"I do not think I shall ever behold your majesty again in this world," replied Lord Derby, in a melancholy tone. "I have a presentiment that I am going to my doom."

"Then stay with me," said the king. "The hiding-places at Boscobel belong of right to you. Proceed thither at once."

"Heaven forbid that I should endanger your majesty's safety by any attempt to preserve my-

self," exclaimed the earl. "If I fall into the hands of the enemy, I shall be cheered by the firm conviction that your majesty will escape, and in the end will be restored to your kingdom. That I shall live to see that happy day I doubt—nay, I am well assured I shall not—but it will come nevertheless."

"Look forward to it, my lord—look forward to our next meeting!" cried Charles.

"We shall meet in heaven, I trust, sire—not on earth," replied the earl, solemnly. "I bid your majesty an eternal farewell."

Charles did not attempt to reply, for he was strongly impressed by the earl's manner, and Lord Derby quitted the room.

The chivalrous but ill-fated peer's presentiments were unfortunately realised. Immediately after taking leave of the king, as described, all the nobles, with the exception of Lord Wilmot, who had engaged the services of John Penderel, the second brother, quitted White Ladies, taking with them the whole troop of Cavaliers, and proceeded, under the guidance of Charles Giffard, to the heath near Tonge Castle, where they expected to

find Leslie and his cavalry. But the Scottish general was gone, and was marching northwards, as they learnt, by way of Newport, so they took the same direction.

They had not, however, ridden many miles when they were overtaken by Lord Leviston and a few of the royal life guards who had fought at Worcester. Lord Leviston and his handful of men were flying before a strong detachment of horse, commanded by Colonel James, and on seeing his lordship's danger, the Earl of Derby and the other nobles at once faced about, and attacking the Roundheads with great fury, drove them back. This success greatly raised their spirits, but it was quickly followed by a reverse. Just beyond Newport, they were encountered by Colonel Lilburn, while Colonel James, having received considerable reinforcements, followed and attacked in the rear.

Leslie's cavalry was completely routed and dispersed. Lord Derby, Lord Lauderdale, Lord Sinclair, and the faithless Scottish leader, were captured, and conveyed first to Whitchurch, and next to Banbury, in Cheshire. Subsequently, the

ill-fated Earl of Derby was removed to Chester, and imprisoned in the castle, there to await his trial for high treason. Charles Giffard was likewise taken prisoner at the conflict near Newport, but contrived to escape at Banbury.

But we are anticipating the course of events, and must return to the fugitive monarch at White Ladies. Careless had witnessed the departure of the devoted band with feelings akin to self-reproach for not going with them, when on returning to the house, he found Richard Penderel with the suit of clothes intended for the king's disguise, and immediately took them to his majesty. That nothing should be wanting, Trusty Dick had brought a coarse shirt and a woodman's cap with the garments, and in a few minutes Charles had taken off his rich apparel, and put on the sturdy forester's habiliments. His buff coat and broadsword-belt were replaced by a leathern doublet, and jerkin of green cloth, while common country hose were drawn above his knees, and heavy hob-nailed shoes had succeeded his riding-boots.

As soon as the change was effected, William

and Richard Penderel were introduced by Careless, and were astonished by the alteration in the king's appearance. Both averred that his majesty looked just like one of themselves, and would impose on the most suspicious rebel.

A clever mimic, Charles tried, and not unsuccessfully, to imitate Trusty Dick's gait and manner. The elder Penderel could not repress a smile as he regarded him. The sole objection urged by those who scrutinised the newly-made forester's appearance was that his hands were too white, but this was quickly remedied by a little charcoal dust. His complexion was dark enough, being as brown as that of a gipsy.

"Your majesty must be careful not to answer if you are spoken to by any of the common folk, since you have not the accent of the country," observed William Penderel.

"Fear nothing. I shall easily acquire it," replied Charles. "Is Lord Wilmot gone?" he inquired.

"Ay, my liege," was the reply. "He left the house immediately after the departure of the troop. My brother John went with him, and

intended to take him to Mr. Huntbach's house at Brinsford, where he will stay till some other hiding-place can be found. Any message your majesty may desire to send can be readily conveyed to him by John."

"And now, sire, since you are fully disguised," said Careless, "I counsel you not to remain here a moment longer. 'Tis possible the house may be surrounded, and then you will be unable to escape."

"Whither do you propose to take me?" asked Charles of the Penderels.

"It will be best that your majesty should remain in the forest during the day, in case an immediate search should be made at Boscobel," replied William Penderel. "We will hide you in a thick part of the wood, about half a mile hence, called Spring Coppice, where no one will be likely to search for you."

"I know Spring Coppice well," said Careless. "If your majesty should hear a whistle, you will understand it is a signal from me, and need not be alarmed. Though unseen, I shall not be far off."

He then took leave of the king, and quitted the house.

No sooner was Charles gone than all traces of his visit were removed by George Penderel and his wife.

His majesty's habiliments were carefully wrapped up and deposited in an old chest, as were his feathered hat and boots, while his shorn locks were preserved like relics.

CHAPTER V.

HOW CHARLES WAS CONCEALED IN SPRING COPPICE, AND HOW
IT RAINED THERE, AND NOWHERE ELSE IN THE NEIGH-
BOURHOOD.

ON quitting the house, Charles and his two stalwart attendants entered the ruins of the old priory, where Trusty Dick, by the aid of the ivy, climbed the massive wall, and looked around to satisfy himself that all was secure. Not perceiving anything to occasion alarm, he soon descended from his post of observation, and the party left the ruins and entered the wood at the rear of the house.

Pursuing a roadway among the trees, they marched on at a quick pace. On either side there

was a good deal of fine timber, and several ancient oaks caught the king's eye as he strode along. Presently they came upon a broad clearing, where the underwood having been removed, only a few scattered trees were left, and having crossed it, they penetrated a wilderness of brambles and thorns, through which Charles could never have made his way unassisted, and this rough barrier passed, they reached a waste overgrown with short wood, which was cut at certain seasons for fuel. This was Spring Coppice, and just beyond it were the shady groves of Boscobel.

Though there were few large trees in Spring Coppice, there was a good deal of tangled underwood, and a thick covert afforded an excellent place of concealment. It was towards this spot that his guides now led the king. While the covert was almost impenetrable to those unacquainted with it, there was an outlet to the Boscobel woods, which could be easily gained in case of need.

In the very heart of the covert, like the centre of a maze, there was a small open space, free from underwood, and covered with a carpet of smooth

sword. Here it was proposed that the king should remain, while his two guides undertook to act as scouts and sentinels, and warn him of any danger. Having shown his majesty how to hide himself amid the underwood, and how to gain the outlet into the adjoining thicket, they left him, promising that one of them would return ere long.

Almost for the first time in his life, Charles was now completely alone. Yesterday, at the same hour, he was a king, and had an army at his command. Now he was dependent for his safety upon a few loyal rustics. Not for a moment did he doubt their fidelity, or believe that threats of punishment or offers of reward would induce them to betray him. Yet accident might bring his enemies to his place of concealment. In that case he was resolved to sell his life dearly, though the only weapon he possessed was the woodman's knife in his girdle.

He strove to divert his melancholy thoughts and while away the time by pacing round and round the little circular spot in which he was enclosed. But he soon got tired of this enforced

exercise, and threw himself at full length on the sward. How he wished that Careless was with him, or Lord Wilmot! To add to his discomfort, the morning, which had been dark and dull, became still more gloomy; clouds gathered overhead, and at length discharged themselves in a steady down-pour. He sought shelter among the trees, but could not protect himself entirely from the wet.

The rain continued—heavily, heavily.

Several hours passed, which seemed more wearisome, more dismal than any hours the king had ever previously spent.

During the long and dreary interval no one came near him, nor did any sounds reach his ear, except the ceaseless pattering of the rain upon the leaves. Now and then he heard the rustle of a rabbit among the underwood, the cry of a black-bird, or the challenge of a cock pheasant. Nothing else. No whistle from Careless—no signal from the Penderels.

Having now no watch he could not tell how time was passing, but he thought it much later than it really was. At last he heard sounds of

some one approaching, and a voice, which he easily recognised as that of Richard Penderel, called out "A friend!"

Trusty Dick was accompanied by his sister, who was married to a woodman named Yates, and the good wife carried a basket containing some eatables and a bottle of sack, the sight of which greatly rejoiced the king, who had become ravenously hungry. Trusty Dick had brought with him a blanket, which he laid upon the ground beneath a tree, so as to form a dry seat for his majesty, while Elizabeth Yates spread the contents of her basket before him. Charles was so hungry that he thought of nothing at first but satisfying his appetite, but after he had consumed half a dozen hard-boiled eggs, a large piece of cold meat, the best part of a loaf, and had well-nigh emptied the flask of sack, he began to converse with Dame Yates.

Though built on the same large scale as her brothers, Elizabeth had rather a comely countenance, and the good-humoured smile that lighted it up as she watched the king's performances was exceedingly pleasant to behold.

"Saints be praised!" she exclaimed; "it does one good to see your majesty enjoy your humble meal."

"I never enjoyed aught so much," replied the king. "I have got a forester's keen appetite. I thank thee for the blanket thou hast brought me, Dick, but if I remain longer here I shall have rheumatism in all my limbs."

"There is danger abroad," replied Dick. "A body of rebel troopers, under the command of Colonel Bloundel, has been to White Ladies. Colonel Bloundel declared you were concealed somewhere, and not only searched the house, but the ruins of the old priory, and was greatly enraged and disappointed when he failed to discover your majesty. He then ordered a dozen of his men to search the forest and join him at Boscobel, and I make no doubt they are there now. My brother William has gone thither to see what they are about, and will bring your majesty word. It is well you were concealed here."

"The saints have had your majesty in their guard!" exclaimed Elizabeth, who, like all her brothers, was a devout Romanist. "A marvel-

lous thing has happened. Elsewhere it has been fine, but here, at Spring Coppice, it has rained."

"It has rained heavily enough, as I can testify from experience," cried Charles.

"But the rain prevented the rebels from searching this wood," observed Dick. "I followed them unobserved, and undoubtedly they were coming hither, but when they found it so wet they gave up the quest, and proceeded to Boscobel."

"'Tis strange, indeed!" said Charles, gravely.

"I see Heaven's hand in it quite plainly!" ejaculated Elizabeth, crossing herself devoutly; "and so will good Father Huddlestone."

"Father Huddlestone!" exclaimed Charles. "You will have to confess to him."

"Ah! you need not fear him, sire," cried Elizabeth. "The good priest is devoted to your majesty. He has taught us all to fear God and honour the king."

"Father Huddlestone has made us what we are, sire," said Dick. "But we must not tarry here longer. I will come again at nightfall."

"Not till then?" cried Charles. "Have you seen aught of Major Careless?"

“No, sire,” replied Dick. “He has kept out of the way of the rebels. And I must again caution your majesty not to stir forth till I return, as some of the enemy may be lurking about.”

By this time Elizabeth had packed up her basket, and the pair departed.

It was still raining steadily, but cheered by the hearty meal he had made, the king did not heed the discomfort so much as he had previously done. Wrapped in his blanket he couched beneath the trees, and soon fell fast asleep, nor did he awake till he was roused by a voice, and found Trusty Dick Penderel standing near him.

“What’s the hour, Dick?” he demanded, yawning and stretching himself. “It seems growing dusk. I have slept ever since you left me.”

“In that case, your majesty must have slept for six or seven hours, for it is now not far from eight o’clock,” replied Dick. “I trust you feel refreshed.”

“I feel equal to any amount of exertion,” cried Charles, springing to his feet. “But what news do you bring me?”

“Not very good, my liege,” replied Dick.

"You must not go to Boscobel. Colonel Bloundel is still there."

"But I cannot pass the night here," cried Charles.

"I do not mean you should, my liege, I propose to take you to my cottage, Hobbal Grange, where I will try to lodge you, in my humble way."

"Hark ye, Dick, a plan has occurred to me while I have been here. I will try to get into Wales, where I have many subjects of proved loyalty. Once at Swansea, I can easily find means of embarking for France. Can you guide me to any place where I may safely cross the Severn?"

"At Madeley there is a bridge. It is about seven miles distant."

"Only seven miles!" exclaimed Charles. "Then I will go to Madeley to-night after refreshing myself at thy cottage."

"As your majesty pleases. But I am sorry you mean to abandon Boscobel."

"I may go there yet," said Charles.

They then quitted the coppice and issued forth into the more open part of the forest.

The rain had now ceased, and the clouds having

entirely dispersed, the night promised to be clear and starlight. They marched along cautiously—halting ever and anon to listen for a sound—but heard nothing to occasion them alarm. Not a trooper was to be seen—indeed, they did not encounter a single individual on the way to Hobbal Grange.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW CHARLES SUPPED AT HOBBAL GRANGE, AND
WHOM HE MET THERE.

HOBBAL GRANGE, the farm-house tenanted by Richard Penderel, was situated on a small green in the midst of the forest on the road between White Ladies and Boscobel. Though described by its owner as a cottage, it was a very comfortable abode. Richard Penderel was married, and his wife, a buxom, good-looking woman, had brought him one son, but he was from home at the time.

On reaching his dwelling, Trusty Dick opened the door, and ushered the king into the house-

place, as it was called—a spacious apartment with a huge fire-place at one end, and furnished with a long oak dining-table, a couple of benches, and some half-dozen chairs.

A good fire burning in the grate gave the room a very comfortable look. The ceiling was low and whitewashed, as were the walls, and the rafters were garnished with hams and sides of bacon, while nets contained sundry oat-cakes. Dick's wife and their niece, Frances, the daughter of William Penderel, a good-looking girl, who had just got into her teens, were frying some collops of meat, as the forester entered with his guest.

"Mary," cried Dick, winking at his wife, as he spoke, "this be Will Jackson, whom I told thee I should bring wi' me to supper."

"Glad to see him, I'm sure," replied Mary, dropping a curtsy, which the king returned with an awkward attempt at a clownish bow that provoked a smile from young Frances Penderel.

"Master Jackson is going to Madeley," pursued Dick, "and being unacquainted with the country, might get lost at night, so I have promised to show him the way there after supper."

"Then he ben't going to sleep here?" observed Mary.

"No, my good dame, I thank you," said Charles. "To-night I shall sleep at Madeley, and to-morrow cross the Severn. I want to get to the Welsh coast as quickly as I can."

"Don't ask any more questions, Mary, but get supper ready," interposed Dick.

"'Twill be ready in a trice," she replied. "Lay a clean cloth, Frances."

In a very few minutes a large dish of collops and a great bowl of potatoes were placed on the table, and the king and his host sat down to the meal, and were waited upon by Mary Penderel and her niece.

A jug of strong ale helped to wash down the viands. Charles rather suspected from the good dame's manner that she was aware of his rank, but he didn't trouble himself on the subject, but went on with his supper.

An unexpected interruption, however, was offered to the meal. Some one tried the door, and finding it fastened, knocked against it rather

authoritatively. Charles instantly laid down his knife and fork and started to his feet.

"Go see who is there," said Dick to his wife.
"But let no one in."

On this Mary went to the door, and in as firm a tone as she could command, for she was a good deal frightened, asked who knocked.

"'Tis I! Don't you know me, Mary?" cried a familiar voice.

"Blessed Virgin!" she exclaimed. "'Tis Father Huddlestone himself!"

"Your majesty may go on quietly with your supper," whispered Dick to the king. "As I have told you, the holy man may be trusted. Open the door, dame."

Mary instantly complied, and a middle-aged and rather stout personage entered the room. His close-fitting cassock of black stuff was covered by a long black gown. His appearance was far from ascetic, his face being round, rosy, and good-humoured in expression, while his scrupulously shaved cheeks showed marks of a very black beard.

Father Huddlestone was priest to Mr. Whitgreave, of Moseley Hall, in the neighbourhood of Wolverhampton, and resided with that gentleman, who was a well-known Royalist.

"Heaven's blessings on this house and on all within it!" exclaimed the priest as he came in. "I do not blame you for keeping your door bolted during these troublous times, good daughter. An enemy might slip in unawares. You have a guest already, I perceive," he continued, glancing at Charles. "I have brought you two more. Nay, do not start, my good woman. No danger need be apprehended from one of your own sex."

"What is this I hear, father," cried Dick, getting up from the table, and stepping towards him. "You have brought some one with you, you say?"

"Here she is," replied Father Huddlestone. "Pray come in, fair mistress."

On this invitation, a young lady in a riding-dress entered the house, followed by a slim, good-looking page.

In the young lady, Charles recognised Jane

Lane at a glance. As to her attendant, he almost fancied, from the slightness of the figure, it must be a female in disguise.

"Methought you said there was only a lady, good father?" cried Dick.

"This page counts for nothing," rejoined the priest. "The lady is Mistress Jane Lane, of Bentley Hall. I have promised her an asylum here for the night, and I am sure you will afford it her."

"There may be reasons why I should not remain here," said Jane, perceiving the king. "I will go on with you to Moseley Hall, good father."

"There can be nothing to prevent you from staying here, so far as I am concerned, fair mistress," observed Charles, who had risen from the table, but stood apart. "I am about to proceed on my journey immediately."

"Are you quite sure you had so decided before my arrival?" asked Jane.

"Quite sure," he replied. "Richard Penderel will tell you so."

"Who is this young man, Mary?" asked Father

Huddlestone, looking very hard at the king. "He hath the dress of a woodward, but neither the look nor the manner of one."

"I will tell your reverence some other time," she replied, evasively.

"Perhaps your reverence can prevail on Mistress Jane Lane to sit down with us and share our supper," said Charles to Father Huddlestone.

"I shall need no entreaty, for in truth I am very hungry," replied Jane, taking a place at the table, while the priest sat down beside her.

"How are you named, good youth?" asked Charles of the supposed page.

"Jasper," was the reply.

"Then come and sit down by me, Jasper," said the king.

"Shall I, madam?" inquired the page of his mistress, who signified her assent, and the so-called Jasper took a place by the king.

Fortunately, Mary Penderel had made such bountiful provision that there was plenty for the new-comers.

"No accident, I hope, has happened to your

mistress, young sir?" observed Charles to the page.

"We were on our way from Wolverhampton to Bentley Hall, when we were attacked by a patrol of rebels in the forest, who were in search for the king," replied Jasper. "They did us no injury, but took our horses."

"How came it that you did not defend your mistress better?" asked Charles.

"How could I defend her against half a dozen armed men?" cried the page. "If I had had a pistol, I would have shot the first Roundhead rascal who came up through the head."

"Rather through the heart, I should say," remarked the king, with a smile.

"Heaven preserve his majesty, and deliver him from his enemies!" exclaimed Father Huddleston. "May their devices be confounded."

"Amen!" ejaculated Jane Lane, fervently. "Could I communicate with his majesty, I would counsel him to embark for France as speedily as may be."

"Such, I doubt not, is his design," remarked

the priest. "But there is danger on every side," he added in a significant tone, and looking at the king as he spoke.

"I have heard no particulars of the battle of Worcester," observed Jasper. "His majesty has escaped, I know, but I would fain learn that his aide-de-camp, Major Careless, is safe."

"Rest easy on that score, Jasper," said the king. "I saw Major Careless this morning."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the page, unable to repress his emotion. "Oh, I am so glad. You have taken a great weight from my breast."

"You appear greatly interested in Major Careless," remarked Charles. "Have you known him long?"

"Only since his majesty arrived in Worcester. I hope I shall see him again."

"Have you any message for him, in case I should meet him?" whispered Charles.

"None," replied the page, in the same tone. "But he will remember the house in Angel-lane."

"Ah! then you are——"

The page imposed silence by a look.

Just then Richard Penderel arose, and glanced

significantly at Charles, who at once took the hint, and rose likewise.

“Don’t let me disturb the company,” said Dick. “But Master Jackson and I have a long walk before us, and must be moving.”

“Quite right, my son,” replied the priest. “But I should like to say a word to Master Jackson before he sets forth.”

Taking Charles aside, he said to him in a low earnest tone: “I will not waste time in professions of loyalty and devotion, nor can I be of any present use to your majesty. Whatever your plans may be, I trust Heaven will prosper them, but should it be necessary for you to seek a place of concealment, you will be safe with my worthy friend and patron, Mr. Whitgreave, of Moseley Hall. Richard Penderel will guide you thither.”

“Should occasion require it, I will take refuge in Mr. Whitgreave’s house,” replied Charles.

“Your majesty will be pleased to learn that Lord Wilmot is now at Moseley,” pursued Father Huddleston.

“I am glad to hear it,” replied Charles. “Should he not hear from me in two or three days, he

may conclude I have escaped to France. And now give me your blessing, father."

While preferring this request he bowed his head, and the good priest gave him his benediction.

As the king passed her, Jane Lane fixed a meaning look upon him, and said in a low tone: "At Bentley Hall your majesty will find a safe place of refuge, should you require it."

A hasty adieu sufficed for the page, and with a warm expression of thanks to Mary Penderel, Charles quitted the house with her husband.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW CHARLES AND TRUSTY DICK WERE FRIGHTENED BY THE
MILLER OF EVELITH.

THE night was so dark, that without a guide it would have been utterly impossible for the king to find his way through the forest. Trusty Dick, however, experienced no difficulty, but marched along through the trees at a quick pace, and Charles kept close beside him. The crackling of sticks and small branches which they crushed beneath their feet as they proceeded, and the rustling of fallen leaves, betrayed their course, but they did not talk much, lest they should be overheard by a patrol of the enemy. Now and then they

paused to listen, and on one occasion, fancying he heard the sound of horses' feet in the distance, Dick immediately struck into another path; but he did not stray far from the direct course.

At this hour there was something mysterious in the gloom of the forest, that acted very powerfully on the king's imagination, and led him to fancy that he discerned strange figures among the trees. But Richard Penderel, to whom he communicated his apprehensions, treated them very lightly.

"Your majesty needn't be alarmed," he said. "The forms you behold are merely trunks of old trees, or projecting boughs. They have a weird look at this time, and I myself have been scared by 'em."

At length they emerged from the forest, and got upon a wide common—greatly to the king's relief, for he had begun to feel oppressed by the gloom. The fresh air, so different from the damp atmosphere he had just been inhaling, laden with the scent of decaying leaves and timber, produced an exhilarating effect upon him, and he strode along vigorously.

While crossing the common, they descried a patrol of horse apparently proceeding in the direction of White Ladies or Boscobel, but they easily avoided them, and quitting the common, they soon afterwards mounted a steep hill, on the other side of which was a brook that turned a water-mill. As they drew near the mill, the sound of voices brought them to a halt. The hour being now late, it was singular that any persons should be astir, and Trusty Dick, naturally alarmed by the circumstance, at first thought of turning back. But to do so would have taken him and his companion considerably out of their course, and he therefore hesitated.

"This is Evelith Mill," he observed in a low voice to Charles. "Roger Bushell, the miller, is a cross-grained fellow, and I think a Roundhead, so I shouldn't like to trust him."

"'Tis safer not," replied the king. "How far are we from Madeley?"

"About two miles," replied Dick. "But if we were obliged to turn back it will add another mile, at least, to the distance."

"Then let us go on," said the king.

So they waited quietly for a few minutes, when the light disappeared, and the voices became hushed.

"Roger Bushell has gone to bed at last," observed Charles. "We may proceed on our way."

So they marched on without fear. But the king was wrong in his supposition, for as they passed the mill a gruff voice called out, "Who goes there?"

"'Tis the miller himself," whispered Dick.

"Well, answer him," said Charles.

Again the challenge was repeated, and more authoritatively than before, "Who are you? Speak!"

"Friends," replied Dick.

"I know you not," cried the sturdy miller. "If you be friends, stand and give an account of yourselves, or sure as I'm an honest man, and you are a couple of rogues, I'll knock you down."

And he brandished a stout staff as he spoke.

"What shall we do?" asked Charles.

"Beat a retreat," replied Dick. "It won't do to be stopped here."

And as the miller rushed forth to seize them

they hurried off; and ascended another hill, never stopping till they were quite out of breath.

"This is a most disgraceful retreat, I must say, Dick," observed Charles.

"I should like to have knocked the dust out of Roger Bushell's jerkin," rejoined Dick. "But I am certain he has got some rebels with him, or he would not have dared to act thus."

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW THE KING WAS RECEIVED BY MR. FRANCIS WOOLFE AT
MADELEY COURT.

It was past midnight when Charles approached Madeley, an ancient moated mansion, built of stone, and very pleasantly situated on the borders of the Severn. It belonged to Mr. Francis Woolfe, an old Cavalier, and father of the gallant Captain Woolfe, who figured at an earlier period of this history. As the hour was late, Mr. Woolfe and his family, with the whole of his household, had long since retired to rest, but they were disturbed by a loud knocking at the door, which continued with very little intermission until the old gentle-

man got up, and, accompanied by his butler, went to see what was the matter. On opening the door he found Richard Penderel, who was well known to him, and without giving the forester time to explain his errand, eagerly inquired whether he brought any tidings of Captain Woolfe.

"I know my son was present at the battle of Worcester," cried the old Cavalier; "and I fear he may be wounded, as I have not heard of him since."

"I am sorry I cannot relieve your honour's anxiety respecting your son," replied Dick. "But well knowing how staunch a Royalist you are, I am come to beg you to hide a fugitive Cavalier, who fought, like Captain Woolfe, at Worcester."

"Don't ask me to do it, Dick!—don't ask me!—I dare not harbour a Royalist!" cried Mr. Woolfe. "Willingly—right willingly would I do so, but there is too much hazard in it. I am already suspected by the rebels—there is a company of militia at Madeley, guarding the bridge and the river—and were they to search my house and find a fugitive Royalist concealed within it I

should be most heavily fined—perhaps imprisoned—perhaps put to death! No, Dick, I will not run this risk for any one, except the king himself.”

“Then what will your honour say when I tell you that he whom I ask you to shelter from his enemies *is* the king? The loyal Mr. Francis Woolfe, I am well assured, will never refuse his sovereign an asylum.”

“You are right, my good fellow—you are right,” cried the old Cavalier, trembling. “I never supposed it was the king. Why did you not tell me so at first?”

“Because his majesty forbade me,” rejoined Dick. “I have disobeyed his orders.”

“But he might have trusted me,” cried Mr. Woolfe. “I would lay down my life for him. Where is his majesty?”

“On the other side of the moat standing beneath yon great elm-tree,” said Dick.

The old Cavalier required no more, but hastily crossing the bridge, proceeded to the spot indicated, followed by his butler and Richard Penderel.

Seeing him advance Charles came forward, and

as they met old Mr. Woolfe threw himself on his knee, while Charles, finding himself discovered, gave him his hand to kiss.

"Sire," cried the old Cavalier, "I never thought to see you at Madeley under such sad circumstances. My house and all within it are yours. Enter, I pray you."

And with as much ceremony as if Charles had been a conqueror instead of a fugitive, he conducted him across the bridge and ushered him into the mansion. For a few minutes he detained his majesty in the hall while the dining-room was lighted up, and when all was ready he led him thither.

To his infinite surprise Charles found an excellent repast awaiting him, and he was served at it by his host and the butler. Seated in this large comfortable room, treated with so much ceremony, and supplied with some of the finest claret he had ever tasted, for a brief space he almost forgot his misfortune.

However, he would not yield to false security, and after emptying his goblet he questioned Mr. Woolfe as to the possibility of crossing the Severn.

The old Cavalier shook his head dolefully. It was utterly impossible, the bridge being guarded by the militia, and all the boats seized. His majesty must be content to stay at Madeley. Mr. Woolfe did not like to make such a suggestion, but as he had no safe hiding-places, and as a search might be made by the rebels at any moment, he would venture to propose that his majesty should sleep——

“I do not require a state-bed,” interrupted Charles. “I am so thoroughly tired that I can sleep soundly anywhere.”

“Then I have the less hesitation in proposing that your majesty should sleep in the barn,” said the ceremonious old Cavalier. “You will be far safer there than in the house.”

“And just as comfortable I make no doubt,” said the king.

“I can answer for your majesty’s safety there, which I cannot do here,” said Mr. Woolfe. “It is just possible that some of the officers of the militia rebels might quarter in the house, as they have done before. In the barn your majesty

would not be liable to a surprise. I will keep all my people away from it."

"I see—I see," cried the king, rising from the table, and heaving a sigh as he gazed round the old oak room, with its dark wainscots and portraits. "Take me to the barn."

Nothing but the sense that he was performing a great duty could have compelled the formal old Cavalier to act as he did, but he well knew how much was at stake. Doing great violence, therefore, to his feelings, he took the king to a barn adjoining the mansion, where his majesty found a very comfortable couch in a haymow.

Richard Penderel slept in the barn. Very fortunate was it that the king did not stay in the house, as it was visited by a patrol of horse before daybreak. The soldiers instituted a rigorous search, but finding nothing to excite their suspicion departed.

Charles slept soundly in the haymow, and the day was far advanced before Trusty Dick thought proper to disturb him. As there was no chance of crossing the Severn, and considerable risk even

in stirring forth, the king did not leave the barn. Breakfast was brought by Dick, and while the king was discussing it in an out-of-the-way corner, he heard the barn door open, and felt sure from the sounds that followed that more than one person had come in. His alarm, however, was instantly dispelled on hearing Mr. Woolfe's voice, and he immediately left his retreat to meet the old Cavalier. With Mr. Woolfe was a much younger individual, on beholding whom his majesty uttered a joyous exclamation.

"Do my eyes deceive me?" he cried. "Can it be Captain Woolfe?"

"Yes; 'tis my dear son, sire," replied the old Cavalier. "He has only just arrived, but on learning you were here, nothing would content him but I must bring him at once to your majesty."

"I am delighted to see him," said Charles. "I owe my preservation to him. Without Captain Woolfe's aid, I might not have escaped from Worcester."

And as he spoke he extended his hand to the young man, who pressed it fervently to his lips.

"It grieves me to find your majesty here," said Captain Woolfe. "I did not dare to return to Madeley last night, but tarried at Evelith Mill with honest Roger Bushell. Even there we were alarmed about midnight by a couple of Roundhead spies, but the sturdy miller frightened them away."

"Soh! you were at Evelith Mill last night?" cried Charles, laughing.

"I was not the only Royalist there, my liege," replied Captain Woolfe. "With me were Major Careless and Lieutenant Vosper."

"Then learn that the two Roundhead spies whom the miller drove away were myself and Trusty Dick Penderel," said the king, still laughing. "'Tis odd I should be put to flight by my friends. But where is Major Careless? Is he hereabouts?"

"No, my liege, he has gone towards Boscobel, where he fancies your majesty is hiding."

"And where I shall be forced to hide after all, since it appears impossible to escape into Wales," said the king.

"I must again implore your majesty not to

make the attempt," cried the old Cavalier. "It would be attended with too much hazard. Your security must be the first consideration, and though I esteem it the highest honour to have the care of your majesty, I feel you will be safer at Boscobel."

"I will go thither to-night," said Charles.

"Twill be the best course to pursue, my liege," observed Captain Woolfe. "Some plan for your escape can be devised. We shall all be ready to lend you aid."

Soon after this the old Cavalier returned to the house, but his son remained in the barn to bear the king company. Though Captain Woolfe was an agreeable companion, and did his best to amuse the king, Charles was very glad when night came on, so that he could shift his quarters with safety. He supped with the old Cavalier and his son, and passed so pleasant an hour with them that he was quite loth to take his departure.

It was not far from midnight when Charles took leave of Mr. Woolfe and his son. At that moment the old Cavalier almost repented that he allowed the king to depart, and made an effort

to detain him till the morrow, but Captain Woolfe thought it best that his majesty should adhere to his plan. Father and son conducted him across the moat, and attended him to the outer gate, and Charles having taken leave of them there, set out on his journey with his faithful guide. Fortunately, their nocturnal walk was unattended by any danger, and the only annoyance they experienced was caused by having to wade across the brook that turned Evelith Mill, but this was a trifling matter, which gave the king no concern whatever.

In less than two hours, as well as they could reckon, for neither of them had a watch, they reached Boscobel Wood; but before entering it Dick deemed it prudent to call at the cottage of his brother John, which was close at hand, and ascertain from him that all was safe.

Accordingly they proceeded thither, and Dick knocked against the door with his staff. An upper window was quickly opened by John Penderel, and seeing who they were, he descended and let them in. His first business was to strike a light, and as he did so the king discovered a Cavalier

—for such his attire proclaimed him—fast asleep in a chair.

“A stranger here!” exclaimed Dick, surprised.
“Why didn’t you tell us so, John?”

“The gentleman is no stranger to his majesty,” replied the other.

Just then, the Cavalier, aroused by the light and the voices, sprang to his feet, and the king perceived it was Major Careless. The unexpected meeting was extremely agreeable to both.

“I heard your majesty was gone to Madeley,” said Careless, after a cordial greeting had taken place between him and the king; “but I felt sure you would never be able to cross the Severn, and I therefore thought it likely you would come to Boscobel. I myself got as far as Evelith Mill, but returned yester morning.”

“Is all safe here?” asked the king.

“No, my liege, very much the reverse I am sorry to say,” replied Careless. “Patrols of the enemy are constantly searching the woods and visiting all the habitations around. I had several narrow escapes yesterday, and but for honest

John Penderel here should infallibly have been captured."

"I am just as much indebted to Trusty Dick," said Charles. "Without him, I should not be here now."

"There are five of us on whom your majesty can rely," said John, who was just as stalwart and as honest-looking as his brothers. "If we had not been loyal, Father Huddlestone would have made us so. Last night, the good priest went to talk to our brother Humphrey, the miller of Boscobel."

"I will now put your loyalty to the test, John," said the king.

"Your majesty cannot please me better," was the reply.

"Go then to Boscobel House, and satisfy yourself that I may safely proceed thither."

"It shall be done, my liege," rejoined John Penderel, evidently well-pleased by the order. "As soon as I have put on my doublet, I will set forth."

"The office is mine, by rights," observed Trusty

Dick. "Nevertheless, I willingly resign it to John."

"Judging by myself, thou hast need of rest, my faithful fellow," said Charles, kindly. "I would fain spare thee further trouble."

John Penderel vanished, but in a minute or two reappeared, fully equipped, and grasping a stout staff, sallied forth.

It was now about three o'clock in the morning, and feeling much fatigued with his walk, and uncertain as to the rest he might obtain, Charles threw himself into the arm-chair lately occupied by Major Careless, and almost instantly fell asleep.

Careless found another seat and followed his majesty's example, while Trusty Dick having carefully barred the door, sat down on a settle, and fell into a sort of doze, during which he dreamed he was fighting half a dozen Roundheads.

More than an hour elapsed before John Penderel returned. All the sleepers were roused by his knock at the door. He had seen a patrol of rebels in the wood, but they were coming from Boscobel—not proceeding thither—and he easily avoided them and went on to the house. There he saw

Brother William, who told him they had got rid of all the rebels, so his majesty might come there without fear.

On receiving this satisfactory intelligence, Charles, being most anxious to obtain a secure asylum, set forth at once. He was accompanied by Careless, and guided and guarded by the two stalwart brothers, who would have sold their lives rather than allow him to be captured. They made their way through the depths of the wood by paths only known to the two foresters, and encountered nothing more dangerous than a squirrel or a thrush.

After half an hour's walk through the wood, they came upon a lawn studded by trees, among which were several ancient oaks. Day was just breaking, and now that they had got out of the dense wood, the sun burst upon them. At the further end of the lawn, Charles perceived an old mansion, with walls chequered black and white, gables, bay-windows with lattice-panes, and an immense chimney-stack projecting from the side. He did not require to be told that it was Boscobel House.

How quiet, how sequestered, how beautiful looked the old structure at that early hour! Charles stood still to gaze at it. No place had ever had the like effect upon him.

While he was still gazing at the picturesque old mansion, and noting the huge chimney-stack we have mentioned, a gigantic figure issued from the garden gate.

It was William Penderel, who having descried the party from an upper window, had come forth to bid his majesty welcome and usher him into Boscobel House.

End of Book the Second.



Book the Third.

THE ROYAL OAK.

CHAPTER I.

SHOWING HOW THE HUNTING-LODGE WAS BUILT BY THE LORD
OF CHILLINGTON, AND HOW IT ACQUIRED ITS NAME.

TOWARDS the latter part of Elizabeth's reign, when those who professed the tenets of the Church of Rome were prevented by heavy penalties from performing the rites of their religion, while such as refused to take the oath of supremacy were held guilty of high treason, John Giffard, eleventh Lord of Chillington, in Staffordshire, himself a strict Roman Catholic, and a great sufferer from

the oppressive measures referred to, determined to provide a safe asylum for recusants in a secluded part of his domains; and with this view he built a hunting-lodge in the depths of Brewood Forest, which then belonged to him, and contrived within the lonesome structure several secret hiding-places.

The situation was remarkably well chosen. Buried in a wood, where it was hardly likely to be discovered, the hunting-lodge was placed on the exact boundary line between Shropshire and Staffordshire, so that it was difficult to say in which county it stood. The whole surrounding district was covered with woods and commons—the nearest habitations being the ruined monasteries of White Ladies and Black Ladies. Several large trees had been removed to make way for the lodge and the outbuildings connected with it, but it was screened by majestic oaks, which grew within a few yards of the gates. Through these trees enchanting views could be obtained of the sylvan scenery beyond, of vale and upland, and purple heath, until the vast prospect was

terminated by the picturesque Clee Hills and the blue outline of the Wrekin.

Nothing, however, save forest timber could be discerned in the immediate vicinity of the lodge, and from this circumstance it obtained its designation. On the completion of the building, the Squire of Chillington invited some of his friends to the house-warming. Among them was Sir Basil Brooke, then newly returned from Rome.

"How shall I name the place?" asked John Giffard.

"I will give you a charming and appropriate name for it," replied Sir Basil. "Call it Boscobel—from the Italian *Bosco bello*—Fair Wood."

The suggestion was adopted, and BOSCOBEL it became.

The solitary forest lodge answered its double purpose well. Its real object was not suspected, nor were its hiding-places discovered, though often resorted to by recusants during the reigns of Elizabeth and James I. Hunting and hawking-parties were sometimes assembled at the lodge

by the Squire of Chillington to keep up appearances, but on such occasions due precautions were always taken for the security of those hidden within the house. No servants were employed except those on whose fidelity entire reliance could be placed—and who were themselves Romanists. Of the numbers of persecuted priests harboured at Boscobel none were ever betrayed. Nor during the Civil Wars was a fugitive Cavalier ever refused shelter.

A staunch Royalist as well as zealous Romanist, Peter Giffard, grandson of the builder of Boscobel, suffered severely for his adherence to the cause of the unfortunate Charles I. His noble ancestral domains were confiscated, and he himself was imprisoned at Stafford. Not till the Restoration did the loyal family recover their estates.

At the time of our history Chillington was almost entirely abandoned. In this magnificent mansion Queen Elizabeth had been entertained in princely style during one of her progresses by John Giffard; and the house, from its size and situation, had been once under consideration as a suitable place of confinement for Mary, Queen of

Scots. Its hospitalities were now at an end—its halls desolate. When the unfortunate Peter Giffard was deprived of his abode, Chillington was converted into a garrison by Sir William Brereton, and great damage done to it by the Parliamentary soldiers. Luckily, they could not destroy the beautiful avenue and the park, though they despoiled the house and laid waste the splendid old gardens.

Boscobel, though only two miles distant from the hall, escaped injury at this perilous juncture. William Penderel, who had been placed in charge of the lodge by the Squire of Chillington, was not disturbed, and was consequently able to afford shelter to many a Royalist. The rest of the brothers were equally lucky. George was allowed to remain at White Ladies, and the others pursued their quiet avocations in the forest. No doubt they enjoyed this immunity solely because they did not excite Sir William Brereton's suspicions.

William Penderel had now been two-and-twenty years at Boscobel. The office of under-steward was conferred upon him at the time of

his marriage, so that he obtained a most comfortable residence for himself and his wife—the only drawback being that the tenure of the post was somewhat insecure, and when the Chillington estates were sequestered, he fully expected to be turned off. However, he was at Boscobel still. William had four children—two sons and two daughters—but they were now from home.

In Dame Joan, his wife, he possessed a capital helpmate. She could not boast of much personal attraction, but she had many excellent qualities. A model of prudence, she could be safely trusted on all emergencies, and she was as good-tempered as discreet. Tall and strong, Dame Joan was not masculine either in look or manner, and her features, though plain and homely, had a kindly expression, that did not belie her nature. She had a thoroughly honest look, and the tidiness of her apparel proclaimed an excellent housewife. Such was the opinion formed by Charles of this worthy woman, as he beheld her for the first time, when crossing the threshold of Boscobel House.

After making him an obeisance, not devoid of

a certain rustic grace, Joan drew back respectfully, and ushered his majesty and Careless into a parlour on the ground floor, and then made another obeisance.

“Oddsfish! my good dame,” said Charles, smiling. “You understand matters of ceremony so well, that you must e’en come to court—supposing I should ever have a court.”

“Boscobel was greatly honoured when the Earl of Derby sought shelter here,” replied Joan. “But it is now far more highly honoured since your majesty has set foot within the house. My husband and myself are not fitting persons to receive your majesty, but we will do our best, and you may depend upon it we will watch over you most carefully.”

This was the finest speech Joan had ever delivered, but she deemed it necessary to the occasion. Charles thanked her graciously, but said, “Mark me, my good dame. All ceremony must be laid aside. Any observance of it might endanger my safety. When I put on this garb I became one of yourselves. Address me only as Will Jackson.”

"I can never bring myself to address your majesty by such a name as that!" said Joan.

"Wife! wife!" cried William Penderel from behind. "You must do whatever his majesty bids you, without a word."

"Why, you are committing a similar error, William," laughed the king. "But if you desire to oblige me, my good dame, you will go and prepare breakfast."

"Master William Jackson shall have the best the house can furnish—and quickly," replied Joan, departing.

The apartment into which the king had been shown was tolerably large, though the ceiling was low, and it was lighted by a bay-window at the further end, and by a lattice-window at the side, commanding the entrance to the house, and looking out upon the wood. A very pleasant room, wainscoted with black oak, and furnished with an ample dining-table, and chairs of the same material. In the days of old John Giffard many a festive party had gathered round that board after a day's hunting or hawking in the forest, but it was long, long since there had been revelry

of any kind at the lodge. Over the carved oak mantelpiece hung a picture that caught Charles's attention. It was the portrait of a grave-looking personage in a velvet doublet and ruff, with eyes so life-like that they seemed to return the king's glances.

"The old gentleman above the fireplace appears to bid me welcome," observed Charles. "He has a fine face."

"It is the portrait of Squire John Giffard of Chillington, who built this house, my liege," said William Penderel. "It has always been accounted a good likeness. Ah! if the worthy squire could but have foreseen who would come here for shelter! Some good saint must have inspired him, when he contrived the hiding-places."

"Of a truth, I ought to feel much beholden to him for providing me with such a place of refuge," remarked Charles.

While examining the room, the king noticed a door on the left, and found on investigation that it opened on a small closet, with a lattice-window looking upon a retired part of the garden.

There was no furniture in the closet except a desk, which might be used for prayer.

"Is this one of the hiding-places?" asked Charles.

"No, my liege," replied William Penderel, who had followed him. "This is an oratory. We are Roman Catholics, as your majesty is aware."

"I see no altar," observed Charles.

William Penderel opened a recess in the wall, so contrived that it had quite escaped the king's attention, and disclosed a small altar, with a cross above it.

"Here we pay our devotions in private," he said.

"And here I will pay mine," rejoined Charles. "I must return thanks to the Great Power that has hitherto preserved me. Leave me."


Careless and William Penderel at once retired, and closed the door of the oratory.

Left alone, Charles knelt down before the little altar, and was for some time occupied in fervent prayer.

CHAPTER II.

HOW TRUSTY DICK BETHOUGHT HIM OF THE OAK.

IN the hasty description of Boscobel House, previously given, it was remarked that the most singular feature of the edifice was a huge projecting chimney-stack. A very extraordinary chimney it was, for it had as many as seven small windows, or apertures, within it, placed at various heights, the two lowest of the openings being about eight or nine feet from the ground. Viewed at the side it could be seen that the chimney-stack, which rose considerably above the roof, formed part of a projecting wing of the



house, and that there must be something peculiar in the construction of the funnels. Altogether it had a strange, mysterious look, and suggested the idea that the builder must have been slightly crazed. Yet, odd as it was, the huge, heavy, fantastic chimney harmonised with the rest of the structure. The reader will have already surmised that within this chimney-stack a secret hiding-place existed; the entrance to it being from a closet connected with a bedroom on the first floor—as will be more particularly described hereafter—while there was an outlet into the garden through a little postern, completely screened by ivy.

Since the king's arrival at Boscobel, the chimney-stack had acquired a new interest in Trusty Dick's eyes, and being now left in the garden to keep watch, he scrutinised it with an anxiety such as he had never heretofore felt, peering up at the narrow slits of windows, and stooping down to ascertain that the postern was completely hidden by the ivy.

Never before had he doubted the security of the hiding-place, but misgivings now came over

him. What if a careful examination of the chimney, outside and inside, should be made while the king was concealed therein? Discovery would then be inevitable. Pondering upon the matter, Dick quitted the garden, and in another instant was among the noble old trees growing near the house.

An idea had taken possession of him, and he walked on till he reached a giant oak which, standing a little clear of its fellows, was able to spread abroad its mighty arms. This was the tree he sought. Though it must have been centuries old, the oak seemed in full vigour, and had suffered very little from decay. Its trunk was enormous. It had not, however, grown to a great height, but had spread laterally. Dick examined this ancient oak very carefully—walked slowly round it—looked up at the bushy central branches, and seemed perfectly satisfied with his scrutiny.

“This is the tree for the king to hide in!” he mentally ejaculated; “this is the tree!—the best in the whole forest. No one could discover him among those thick branches.”

He was still examining the oak when he was roused by Major Careless, who had been searching for him, and having found him, called out, "What ho ! Dick—have you deserted your post ?"

Dick explained the object that had brought him thither, and when he concluded, Careless said, "You are right, Dick. In that oak our royal master will be safe from his enemies. I will bear him company while he hides within the tree. But I must look at it more closely."

Not content with inspecting the tree, Careless determined to test its efficiency as a place of concealment, and with his companion's aid, he therefore climbed up into it, and concealed himself among the smaller branches.

"Canst see me now, Dick ?" he called out.

"See you !—not a bit," rejoined the other. "I should never guess your honour was up there."

The assurance was quite enough for Careless, and he quickly descended.

"Thou hast made a most lucky discovery, Dick," he cried. "'Tis a famous tree to hide in. His majesty will be as comfortable amid its

branches as if seated in an arm-chair. I will tell him so."

While returning to the house they caught sight of two persons approaching through the trees, and might have felt some alarm had not Dick instantly recognised his brother Humphrey.

With Humphrey Penderel was a well-clad youth, whose slight figure contrasted strikingly with that of the stalwart miller.

As the pair advanced, Careless's curiosity was much excited by the appearance of this youth, and he questioned Dick concerning him.

"He is named Jasper," was the reply. "He is page to Mistress Jane Lane."

"Mistress Jane Lane's page! Impossible!" cried Careless, whose surprise increased as the youth drew nearer, and his delicately-formed features could be more clearly discerned.

"Nay, 'tis quite certain," remarked Dick. "He came with her the other night to Hobbal Grange. He is a forward youth, and talked much with the king, who sat beside him, and seemed to notice him."

“ I marvel his majesty did not tell me of the meeting,” cried Careless.

“ Doubtless, he had forgotten it,” said Dick.

They had waited till the others came up, and as the page approached, he seemed somewhat confused, but quickly regained his composure.

Humphrey Penderel, the miller of Boscobel, was just as big, and as strongly-built as his brothers, but his broad good-humoured countenance did not wear its customary smile. On the contrary, he appeared anxious. After returning the sturdy miller’s salutation, Careless addressed the page, who for the moment completely engrossed his attention.

“ Good morrow, Jasper !” he said.

“ I give your honour good day,” replied the page, doffing his cap, and letting fall locks that had evidently not been subjected to Puritan scissors. “ I believe I am speaking with Major Careless.”

“ Right, good youth. If thou hast aught to say to me in private, prithee step aside.”

“ I have nothing to say to your honour that the others may not hear,” returned Jasper, de-

clining the invitation. "I will only ask you to bring me to his majesty."

"I know not that his majesty will see you," said Careless. "I will take your message to him."

"I am quite sure he will see me," rejoined the page. "Mention my name to him, and 'twill suffice."

"Aha! you think so. His majesty will laugh at me if I tell him that a saucy page desires to be admitted to his presence."

"I pray you make the trial," said Jasper. "You will find that I am right, and you are wrong."

"Do you bring a message from Mistress Jane Lane?"

"Your honour must excuse my answering that question. My business is important—very important—and does not admit of delay. If you decline to take me to his majesty, I will proceed to the house, and endeavour to find him. I will not be thwarted in my purpose."

"You have boldness enough for anything."

"'Tis a duty to be bold when the object is to serve the king."

"How knew you that his majesty is at Boscobel? Tell me that."

"I obtained the information from Humphrey Penderel, who brought me here. But do not question me now—I must and will see the king."

" 'Must and will' see him? "

"Ay, and without delay. You will incur his sovereign displeasure if you detain me."

"I will put that to the test," cried Careless. "You must stay here while I go to him."

An end, however, was put to the discussion by the appearance of the royal personage to whom it related.

Charles, having finished his devotions in the oratory, had come forth into the garden, and after lingering there for a short time had passed out into the wood, where he chanced upon an opening that gave him a view of the vast sylvan scene with the Clee Hills and the rounded Wrekin in the distance.

After gazing at the fair prospect for a few minutes he moved in another direction, and presently came in sight of the party standing beneath the trees. Great was his surprise, when

the page, who could not be restrained by Careless, ran towards him, and would have bent the knee, if the king had not checked him.

“How is this?” cried Charles. “Have you left your mistress to follow the fortunes of a fugitive Cavalier?”

“I hope soon to rejoin Mistress Jane Lane, my liege,” replied Jasper. “I have not come in quest of Major Careless, for sooth to say, I did not know he was here. I have come to warn your majesty that your enemies are on your track, and will search for you here to-day?”

“Here!” exclaimed Charles.

“Here—at Boscobel,” rejoined Jasper. “They believe they have run you to ground, and make sure of capturing you. Your majesty will wonder how I obtained this information. You shall hear. Yesterday, Mistress Jane Lane and myself remained at Hobbal Grange, as we did not like to quit our retreat, but in the evening we proceeded to the mill belonging to Humphrey Penderel, being assured that that honest man would convey us to Moseley Hall. We had not long arrived at the mill, when a patrol stopped there, and we

had only just time to hide ourselves when the rogues entered the house. I was concealed in a chest standing in the room in which they sat down, and consequently overheard their discourse. It related entirely to your majesty. You have been traced to White Ladies, and they are certain you are somewhere hereabouts. They are equally certain they shall be able to discover your retreat—but I trust you will be able to baffle them. Their orders are to search Boscobel to-day, and they will be accompanied by Colonel James, who is now quartered at Chillington. All this, and a good deal more, I heard while ensconced in the chest. They spoke of the reward offered for your majesty's discovery, and told Humphrey Penderel he should have a thousand pounds, which would make him rich for life, if he delivered you up to them, but that he would be hanged as a traitor if he helped to conceal you. Humphrey made no answer at the time, but afterwards declared he should like to have broken their heads for so insulting him."

"Brave fellow!" exclaimed Charles. "He is as trusty as his brothers."

"No fear of him," said Jasper. "But Colonel James is greatly to be apprehended. He is one of your majesty's most dangerous enemies, and will use his utmost endeavours to find you. I do not think you will be safe at Boscobel."

"Where shall I be safe?" cried Charles. "I have only just arrived here, and now you counsel me to quit my retreat."

"Hide yourself in the forest, sire, and return to the house after it has been searched."

"The advice is good, and I am inclined to follow it," rejoined the king. "Mistress Jane Lane, I trust, is in safety?"

"She is at Moseley Hall, sire. As soon as the rebels were gone, Humphrey Penderel put a pillion on his pad-nag, and took her there."

"And you?"

"I remained to warn your majesty."

"I am infinitely obliged to you—but confess that you had some slight expectation of finding Major Careless with me, and I am glad you have not been disappointed."

"I had no such expectation, sire," replied the page, blushing. "I understood Major Careless

was at Madeley. I neither sought, nor desired a meeting with him."

"Oddsfish! you have changed your mind since we last met."

"Perhaps so, sire. But I would not have my motive misconstrued. 'Tis devotion to you that has induced me to take this step. When I learnt that Colonel James was at Chillington—in quest of you—and resolved to discover your retreat, I felt you were in great danger, and I therefore made up my mind to warn you. Had I not found you here I should have gone to all the places where you were likely to take refuge. I have discharged my duty—and unless your majesty has some commands for me, I shall take my departure for Moseley Hall, where I hope to find Mistress Jane Lane. If she has gone on to Bentley Hall, I shall follow her thither."

"Shall I send Major Careless with you?"

"On no account. Humphrey Penderel has undertaken to take charge of me. Heaven guard your majesty!"

Making an obeisance to the king, Jasper hastened back to the party who had been watching

the interview with some curiosity, and signing to Humphrey Penderel, the sturdy miller instantly started off through the trees, while the page followed him, totally disregarding Major Careless's entreaties to him to stop.

CHAPTER III.

HOW THE KING AND CARELESS TOOK REFUGE IN THE OAK.

CARELESS would have followed, but was prevented by the king, who strode quickly towards the spot where he was standing with Trusty Dick, and forbade him to stir.

"Spare me a moment, I beseech you, sire," cried Careless. "I must have a word with this youth."

"Stir not," said Charles, in an authoritative tone. "He has told me all it is necessary I should know, and you can question him on your own account at a more convenient season."

"But there seems to be a misunderstanding, sire, which may be rectified in an instant, if you will only allow me——"

"Not now," interrupted Charles. "No time must be wasted in idle talk. The youth has come to warn me that this house of Boscobel will probably be searched to-day by Colonel James, who is quartered at Chillington."

"Humphrey has just informed me that the rebel troopers were at the mill last night, sire," observed Dick; "and they told him they were sure your majesty was concealed somewhere hereabouts, and they would never rest till they found you."

"They told him something more," said Charles. "They offered him a large reward to betray me."

"He didn't tell me that," said Dick. "But Humphrey is no traitor, sire."

"He is as loyal and faithful as yourself, Dick. I cannot say more. But now—give me your frank opinion. In the event of a rigorous search by this confounded Colonel James, do you think I should be safe in yonder house?"

"Well, your majesty might be discovered—and you might not," hesitated Dick.

"That's no answer, Dick," said the king.

"Speak plainly, man."

"I've already had some misgivings, sire. While these scoundrelly troopers are about, and especially when they've got an active leader, who will peer into every hole and corner, my honest opinion is that your majesty will be safer in the wood than in the house. There are no hiding-places like those of Boscobel—that I'll uphold—but your majesty's safety is too precious to be trifled with."

"Nothing must be left to chance," said Careless. "I am of Trusty Dick's opinion that till this threatened danger has blown over, your majesty will be safest in the wood. We have found a tree in which you can hide."

"I hope it is an oak," cried Charles. "I would rather owe my safety to the king of the forest than to any inferior tree."

"Truly it is an oak—a grand old oak—and hath not its peer in the forest," said Dick.

"Take me to it," said Charles.

In another minute he stood before the tree.

He was gazing at it with admiration, when William Penderel and his brother John were seen at a distance, evidently in quest of his majesty, and no sooner did they descry him than they hurried forward.

"You are looking for me, William?" said the king.

"Your majesty must be pleased to return at once to the house," replied William Penderel. "Indeed, I must make bold to say it is highly imprudent to stray so far away, when the enemy is lurking about. John, who has been acting as scout, brings word that a small detachment of troopers, with Colonel James at their head, are coming from Chillington, and are almost certain to find their way here."

"I have run so fast to get before them that I have well-nigh lost my breath," gasped John. "But I beseech your majesty to conceal yourself without delay."

"I mean to do so—in this tree," replied Charles.

"In this tree!" cried William, in a tone of disappointment. "Everything is prepared in the house."

"His majesty has decided upon taking refuge in this oak," said Careless.

"Nay, then, no more need be said," observed William Penderel. "And perhaps it may be for the best. But you have not breakfasted, sire. And my good dame has got all ready for you."

"I must dispense with breakfast, I fear," observed Charles, with a sigh.

"Oh! we can breakfast in the tree," cried Careless. "There is every convenience among the branches. Can't you bring a basket of provisions, William, with a flask of wine?"

"Suppose I am caught by the Roundheads, they will at once conclude the provisions and wine are intended for his majesty. Most assuredly, the house will be watched."

"You cannot be too cautious, William," observed the king. "I care not how long I fast."

"But I do," groaned Careless.

"Help me to climb the tree," cried Charles.

The king, who was remarkably active, scarcely needed the assistance he demanded, and, with very slight aid from William Penderel, was quickly among the branches.

"Your majesty is as nimble as a squirrel," cried the forester, in admiration.

"Are you coming to me, Careless?" said the king, looking down.

"Most certainly, sire," replied the major.

And in another instant he was by the king's side.

"Do not tarry here longer, my good friends," cried Charles to the brothers. "I feel quite safe, now I am in this oak. Return to me when you can do so without risk."

In obedience to his commands, the three brothers departed—William Penderel returning to the house, while Trusty Dick and John posted themselves in different parts of the wood, but at no great distance from the oak in which the king was hidden.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW CARELESS CAPTURED AN OWL IN THE OAK.

SEATED upon a large bough, and with his feet upon a lower branch, the king looked down at Careless, and could not help laughing at him.

"This would be an amusing adventure if your majesty's safety were not in question," observed the major.

"I suppose you never spent a day in a tree, Will?"

"Never, sire. I don't know what it's like. I have done a good many strange things in my time, but this is one I never yet did. We must

make ourselves as cheerful as we can under the circumstances."

"You have the happy knack of being always cheerful, Will."

"I am not half so light-hearted as your majesty. Besides, I have nothing to trouble me. I have not lost a kingdom. I have not even lost a mistress."

"I am not so certain of that," laughed Charles.

"At any rate, her loss does not give me much concern. Women are enigmas, and pass my comprehension."

"Thou art thinking of one in particuler."

"The sex are all alike—whimsical, capricious, inconstant."

"But always attractive. What hath displeased thy mistress with thee?"

"On my honour, sire, I know not. Methought she was flying at higher game."

"You need fear no rival in me, Will. I am proof against all feminine wiles just now. I have something else to think of. But let us examine our quarters,"

"Climb a little higher up, my liege, and you

will find a most comfortable seat—there!—between the main stem and one of the upper branches.”

“I have it,” said Charles, seating himself. “Oddsfish! how thick the foliage is! ’Tis a perfect luxury to sit amongst it. Find a place near me if thou canst.”

Careless obeyed, and while searching for a convenient place among the branches, suddenly called out:

“Adzooks! We have a companion, sire.”

“A companion!” exclaimed the king, in surprise. “What sort of companion?”

“An owl,” replied Careless. “A great horned owl. Behold him!—perched on that branch, puffing angrily at me for intruding upon his rest. I wonder he has not taken flight. I’ll try and capture him. He may be of use to us.”

“In what way useful? We are better without him than with him, methinks.”

But the interdiction was too late. Careless had caught the owl by throwing his mantle over him.

“Here he is, sire!” he cried, delighted with his success.

"If thou couldst cook him now he is caught, there would be some gain," laughed Charles.

"He will serve to amuse us if he answers no other purpose," said Careless. "But hark! I hear a sound." And after listening intently for a moment, he added in a low voice to the king, "'Tis the trampling of horse. A patrol is coming this way."

"I hear the voices of the rogues. Are we perfectly concealed?"

"Perfectly, my liege. Keep quite still, I beseech you! The slightest noise may betray us."

From the sounds that reached their ears it was plain that three or four horsemen had halted beneath the tree, and were lamenting the ill success that had attended their search for the royal fugitive.

"'Tis strange Charles Stuart contrives to evade us so long," remarked one of them. "I begin to think he has escaped."

"Had he attempted to escape, we should assuredly have captured him," cried another. "He hath baffled us by keeping quiet. I doubt not he is still in this wood. Ah! if we could only dis-

cover his retreat. That Humphrey Penderel could have helped us to it if he would. He is a lying rogue."

"Colonel James thinks that the malignant prince will be found at Boscobel," observed a third. "But I doubt it. He does not enter a house. My belief is that he is hidden in a tree."

"Perchance in a tree like this?" observed the first interlocutor. "If such is thy opinion, dismount quickly, and climb the tree—even to the top thereof."

"And be laughed at for my pains. No, I will not climb the tree, but I will discharge my caliver into its branches. If I bring down Charles Stuart with the shot ye will not mock me."

"Of a surety not—we will greatly applaud thy wisdom," cried the others.

Upon this the trooper who had previously spoken, pointed his caliver upwards, and fired into the thick of the branches. A loud rustling sound followed the shot.

"I have hit something!" cried the trooper, exultingly. "Peradventure it is the king."

"If it be the king he has taken the form of a bird," cried the troopers, laughing.

As they spoke the owl dropped down on their heads, and its wing being broken by the shot, it fluttered along the ground.

Shouting with laughter, the troopers pursued the unlucky bird, but could not catch it.

"I have had a narrow escape," said Careless to the king, as soon as the coast was clear. "That rogue's bullet came confoundedly near me. Your majesty will now admit that an owl may be of some use. It has helped us to get rid of those rascally troopers."

CHAPTER V.

HOW THEY BREAKFASTED IN THE OAK.

THANKFUL for their escape, the king and Careless remained perfectly quiet for some time, conversing only in whispers, lest an enemy might be lurking near.

More than an hour elapsed without anything occurring to cause them fresh alarm, when a low whistle was heard.

“A signal!” exclaimed Charles.

“It may be a device to induce us to discover ourselves,” whispered Careless.

After a pause the whistle was repeated, and somewhat more loudly.

"I will go a little lower down and endeavour to make out who it is," said Careless.

While he was cautiously descending, a voice, which both recognised, called out :

" 'Tis I, William Penderel !"

"Heaven grant he has brought us something to eat !" exclaimed the king. "Go down to him quickly, Will."

On emerging from the foliage, Careless beheld William Penderel at the foot of the tree, having a basket in his hand and a cushion under his arm.

"Never wert thou more welcome, friend William," cried Careless, enchanted at the sight. "His majesty is well-nigh famished, and I should have been forced to come to thee for food hadst thou not made thy appearance."

"You must not quit the tree on any consideration," returned William. "Boscobel is surrounded by the enemy. I have been obliged to steal hither by a path known only to myself, and even then I ran the greatest risk. Do not come down, I pray your honour," he added, seeing that Careless, who was standing on the lowest

bough, was about to descend. "I will hand the basket up to you."

The feat would have been difficult to any man of less gigantic stature than William Penderel, but was easily accomplished by him.

Just as Careless obtained possession of the basket, the king appeared above his head.

"Here is your majesty's breakfast," cried Careless, gleefully.

"And here is a cushion for your majesty to sit upon while breakfasting," said William, handing it up.

"Truly, thou art most thoughtful, William," said the king. "I cannot thank thee sufficiently."

"I must not remain here longer now," said the forester. "I will return when I can do so with safety. Meantime, I counsel your majesty to keep close hidden."

"Answer me one question before you go, William," said Charles. "Has the house been searched?"

"No, sire," he replied. "But it is strictly watched by the rebel soldiers. Apparently, they

are waiting for their leader. I must get back before he arrives !”

With this he departed.

The king and Careless then took the basket to the upper part of the tree, and arranged the cushion between the forked branches, so that it formed a very comfortable seat.

Evidently replenished by Dame Joan, the basket contained all that could be desired for a substantial meal—cold meat, a cold pie, bread, butter, and cheese, with wooden platters, wooden spoons, horn cups, and every other requisite, including a couple of white napkins. Nor was a flask of canary omitted.

“Heaven bless that thoughtful Dame Joan ! How much we owe her !” cried Charles, as he spread a napkin on his knee. “Give me some of that pie, Will, and take good care you let none fall while cutting it.”

“Fear me not, sire,” said Careless, performing the office of carver very dexterously, all things considered, and handing a large piece of pigeon-pie to the king.

He then set to work himself, and with such

goodwill that in a marvellously short space of time the dish was completely emptied. The horn cups were then filled, and a fresh attack was made on the cold meat, and continued stoutly for some time, till both parties were obliged to give in. Careless, however, held out longer than his royal master.

Everything being replaced in the basket, it was hung upon a branch, to be again applied to in case of need. The pangs of hunger, from which he had been suffering rather sharply for the last few hours, being now appeased, Charles began to feel extremely drowsy, and at length, being quite unable to resist the strong inclination to slumber, he reclined his head on Careless's lap, and almost instantly dropped asleep.

The chief anxiety of the faithful attendant was to prevent his royal master from falling, but there was little chance of such an accident, for the king never moved. The real risk was lest Careless himself should follow his majesty's example, for he was oppressed by drowsiness in an equal degree, but by a great effort he conquered the feeling.

Thus things continued for some time, during which Careless never altered his position for fear of disturbing the slumbering monarch. But Charles was not easily awakened, as will presently appear.

On a sudden, Careless was roused from the dreamy state of mind in which he was lost by a cry for help, and as he happened to be thinking of Jasper at the moment, he naturally concluded that the cry must proceed from the page.

In another moment he became convinced that his supposition was correct. This was not the first time he had heard that voice in distress, though under far different circumstances from the present. He could not look out from his place of concealment to ascertain the cause of the outcries, but it seemed to him that the luckless page was flying from a patrol, and in imminent danger of being captured. Had it been possible he would have flown to the youth's assistance, but he could not quit his position. His anxiety almost amounted to torture, but he was obliged to bear it.

Charles slept on soundly as ever.

Listening intently, Careless heard the shouts of

the troopers as they galloped among the trees, and he again heard Jasper's voice, but faint and far off. Then it ceased altogether. Was the fugitive captured? As Careless could still hear the fierce shouts of the pursuers he hoped not. But he was left in a state of agonising suspense, for very soon the shouts of the troopers ceased also.

Still the king moved not, but continued buried in sleep for some time longer. At last he roused himself, but it took him some minutes to completely shake off his lethargy.

"I have had a strange dream, Will—a kind of nightmare," he said. "Methought that pretty page, Jasper, was calling out for help, and neither of us could stir."

"'Twas no dream, sire," replied Careless. "The circumstance actually occurred. I was awake, and heard the cries. They pierced my heart."

"Why did you not answer them?"

"My duty to your majesty forbade me. I would not even waken you—for I well knew what your chivalrous impulse would have suggested."

"And you allowed him to be captured?—ha!"

“I trust he escaped—but I cannot say. I am now right glad that I did not wake your majesty. ’Twas a hard matter to keep quiet I will frankly confess, but I could not desert my post. Duty before everything.”

The king smiled, and patted his shoulder. “Thou art ever faithful,” he said.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW COLONEL JAMES HALTED BENEATH THE OAK.

NOTHING more passed between them for some time, and Charles seemed to be once more yielding to lethargic feelings, when he was effectually aroused by the trampling of horse. Evidently a small detachment of troopers was coming that way, and a halt took place beneath the oak. No sooner did the voice of their leader reach Careless's ears, than he remarked in a whisper to the king, "Tis Colonel James, sire."

"We must not quit this forest empty-handed," said James. "Unless the knave and his wife who

have care of Boscobel have deceived me, Charles Stuart is not concealed there. Neither is he at either of those houses of abomination, White Ladies, or Black Ladies. Yet I am well assured he is hereabouts, and have him I will; for what answer shall I give to the Lord General, if the head of the malignants be suffered to escape. Search, then, most carefully. Let men be posted at various points, and if any one be found in the forest—woodman or not—compel him to give an account of himself, and if he fails to do so satisfactorily, arrest him.”

“We did discover a youth in the forest, but being exceeding fleet of foot, he escaped us,” remarked one of the soldiers.

“How? escaped!” cried Colonel James, angrily. “It might have been Charles Stuart himself. Why did you not shoot him, Madmannah?”

“It was not Charles Stuart, colonel,” replied the soldier. “’Twas a mere stripling. We were close upon his heels when he disappeared suddenly from our sight—nor could we find him again.”

“Ye are not half quick enough,” said Colonel

James, sternly. "In which direction did the youth run?"

"Towards Boscobel House, colonel," replied another of the soldiers. "But he could not have gained the house."

"Ye have done your work negligently," said James, still more sternly.

"The reproof is unmerited, colonel," said Madmannah. "We have shown no lack of zeal."

"Find me Charles Stuart, and I will retract what I have said. But I repeat, ye have done your work imperfectly. I will have every tree in the forest searched wherein a man might be hidden, and I will begin with this oak."

It will be readily supposed that the determination thus expressed by Colonel James caused great alarm to Charles and his companion, but their uneasiness increased when the Republican leader continued in an authoritative voice :

"Thou art active, Ezra. Dismount at once, and climb the tree."

The king and Careless gave themselves up for lost. There seemed to be no possibility of escape.

But they were quickly relieved by Ezra's response to the order.

"No use in searching this oak, colonel."

"No use, sayst thou?"

"None, colonel. I have already discharged my caliver into the tree."

"That is true," said the other soldiers.

"Nay, if that be so, 'twere a waste of time to climb the tree," said James. "We will look out for another, further on."

"Shall we fire a volley into the tree, colonel, to make sure?" asked another of the soldiers.

"'Tis needless," replied James. "March!"

CHAPTER VII.

HOW THEY PLAYED AT DICE IN THE OAK.

THE occupants of the oak breathed again after the departure of Colonel James and his troopers, and though they had been greatly alarmed at the time, they soon recovered their spirits, and laughed at the incident.

“Perhaps the excitement was a little too great,” observed Charles; “but it has served to break the monotony of our somewhat dull existence. Time, it must be owned, passes very slowly when one is compelled, like the fowls of the air, to roost in a tree. I hope we shall soon have another visit from our faithful William Penderel.”

"Your majesty must not look for him before night."

"I would night were come. How many wearisome hours have we to pass? Never did I feel so strong a desire for active exercise—just because I must not take it."

"Your majesty had best go to sleep again. Pity we have neither cards nor dice to divert the tedium."

"I have it," cried Charles. "Cards cannot be provided, but the other deficiency may be easily supplied. Acorns will serve for dice, and our horn drinking-cups will make admirable dice-boxes."

"Bravo! your majesty has a rare wit," exclaimed Careless.

Charmed with the notion, he set to work at once to carry it out, and gathering a few acorns, marked them with the point of his dagger. The horn cups were next produced, and carefully wiped with a napkin, which was then folded and laid on a branch of the tree to serve for a board.

"At what game will your majesty be pleased

to play?" cried Careless, rattling the extempore dice in the cornet.

"Hazard would be most appropriate," replied Charles. "But we have had enough of that of late. I prefer 'passage,'" he added, taking three of the dice. "Plague on't, I have nothing to stake—not a crown."

"Your majesty has already staked a crown——"

"Ay, and lost it," interrupted the king.

"Only temporarily, sire. You will soon have it back again. I have a few pistoles left," he added, producing his purse. "Shall we divide them?"

"Be it so," replied Charles.

Putting down a couple of the pistoles he had received from Careless, he then threw, calling out "Quatre," as he made the cast, and he continued throwing until stopped by Careless, who exclaimed:

"Doublets above ten. Your majesty passes and wins."

"I thought I was in luck to-day," cried Charles.

The play went on, without much benefit to Careless. Ere long, every pistole was swept up

by the king, who was put into very good humour by his success.

“Oddsfish ! I have won all thy money, Will,” he exclaimed. “But take back half, and let us begin anew. Since we have found out this pleasant pastime, I care not how long I am detained here. Never, sure, was oak so enchanting as this.”

“Suppose we try ‘in and in,’ by way of variety, sire ?” said Careless.

Charles assented, and they began to play again, and soon became so excited by the game, that they neglected the dictates of prudence, and talked louder than they ought to have done. Suddenly a sound from below, like the clapping of hands, brought them to their senses. They became instantly silent, and regarded each other anxiously.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW THEY HAD A VISITOR IN THE OAK, AND IN WHAT
MANNER THEY TREATED HIM.

THE sound was repeated. Though believing it to be a signal, they did not dare to respond.

“Do you hear me?” cried a voice which they both recognised. “’Tis I—Jasper. Come down quickly. There is danger.”

“Danger of what?” demanded Careless.

But no answer was made. The page was gone.

“We had best attend to the warning, sire,” observed Careless.

Charles thought so too, and they were preparing to descend, when they were stopped by hearing

other voices—rough and menacing in tone—at the foot of the tree. It was evident that the speakers were a couple of troopers; who had tied up their horses and come thither on foot.

“If it should turn out as I conjecture, Ezra,” said one of them, “and Charles Stuart proves to be hidden in this tree, we shall easily effect his capture, and obtain the reward.”

“Without doubt. But why dost thou think he is here hidden, Madmannah?”

“A revelation seemed made to me, when I came hither an hour or two ago with Colonel James,” replied Madmannah. “But I would not disclose what was then imparted to me—save to thee, Ezra. “Thou shalt share the reward.”

“And the danger,” observed Ezra.

“The danger will be mine, seeing that I mean to climb the tree,” said Madmannah. “Thou wilt remain here.”

“I am content,” replied Ezra. “But I have little faith that thou wilt find him thou seekest.”

This discourse reached those above.

“There are but two of them, sire,” remarked

Careless to the king. "Shall we descend and attack them?"

"Not so," replied Charles. "Let this fellow come up if he will. We can hurl him down on his comrade's head."

It now became evident from the noise that Madmannah was climbing the tree.

"Give me thy dagger," said the king. "I will deal with him."

Careless obeyed, but held himself in readiness to assist the king.

As Madmannah entered the thick part of the tree, where he was concealed from his comrade's view, he was suddenly seized with an iron grasp by the king, who placed the dagger at his throat.

"Utter a word, and thou art a dead man," said Charles, in a deep whisper.

His looks showed so plainly that he would execute his threat, that Madmannah did not dare to disobey, but prudently held his tongue.

Seeing how matters stood, and fearing lest the trooper might free himself sufficiently from the king's grasp to draw a pistol, Careless quickly

descended and disarmed him—depriving him of all weapons he had about him.

“I will slay thee without hesitation unless thou renderest implicit obedience to my commands,” said Charles to the trooper.

At this moment Ezra called from below :

“Hast thou found him?”

“Say that thou hast lost thy labour,” whispered Charles, holding the poniard more closely to the trooper’s throat. “Speak loudly, so that he may hear thee.”

Madmannah did as enjoined.

“I expected as much,” cried Ezra, angrily. “Thou hast brought me here on a fool’s errand. Come down quickly, or I will depart without thee.”

“Let thy answer be, ‘Go, an’ thou wilt,’ ” said Charles.

And Madmannah repeated what he was told.

“Add, that he may go to the devil if he is so minded,” said Careless.

Madmannah made the required addition, and Ezra marched off in high dudgeon.

"Now let me go," implored Madmannah. "I swear not to betray you."

"We cannot trust him," said Careless. "These false-hearted knaves regard not an oath. We can only insure his silence by putting him to death. Let us hang him to a branch of the tree."

"Spare me!" cried the trooper, horribly frightened. "By all that is sacred I swear not to betray you!"

"I am for hanging him. 'Tis the safest plan," said Careless.

Though not seriously uttered, the threats produced the desired effect. The trooper begged hard for his life.

"Shall we let him go?" said Charles, somewhat moved.

"Assuredly not," replied Careless. "Since he has been fool enough to run his head into a noose, he must take the consequences."

"It will greatly inconvenience us to detain him as a prisoner," said Charles. "But there is no alternative."

"Pardon me, there is the alternative of hanging."

"Hark thee, fellow," cried Charles. "Thy life shall be spared, but thou must submit to restraint. Thy hands must be bound, and thine eyes blindfolded."

"Nay, if that be done unto me, I shall fall down from the tree, and break my neck," groaned Madmannah.

"No matter," said Careless.

"Seat thyself between these branches, and move not," said the king.

Aware that resistance would be useless, Madmannah obeyed. Careless then took off the prisoner's belt, and with it fastened his arms tightly behind his back; completing his task by tying his own scarf over the man's eyes.

"Attempt to call out and we will gag thee," he said.

"Nay, I will keep silence," rejoined Madmannah. "Yet tell me how long I am to be detained here?"

"Till this time to-morrow," answered Careless; "for then we shall be far off."

"Then ye mean to leave me here?" said the prisoner.

"We shall leave thee, but the tree will be watched," remarked Charles.

Madmannah asked no further questions. Naturally, his presence was a great annoyance to the king and his companion, and they moved as far from him as they could, and conversed in whispers.

Things went on thus for more than an hour, when the voice of Ezra was heard from below, calling out :

"Art thou still here, Madmannah?"

The prisoner heard the inquiry, but did not dare to make any answer, for he felt the point of the poniard at his throat, and Ezra departed.

No one else—friend or foe—came near the oak.

The day seemed interminable—but night came at last. In expectation of the arrival of William Penderel, they had got all in readiness for departure. But what was to be done with the prisoner? That was rather a perplexing consideration, for the king did not altogether like to leave him in the tree. Charles was still undecided, when a signal was given, and peering out from the screen of foliage he could just

distinguish three huge figures standing at the foot of the tree.

"The fellow shall go down with us," he observed in an under tone to Careless. "William Penderel and two of his brothers are below. They will dispose of him. Unloose him quickly."

Careless obeyed the injunction.

"Am I to be set at liberty?" asked the prisoner, joyfully, as his hands were unfastened.

"That depends," replied Careless. "The bandage will not be removed from thine eyes, so it will behove thee to be careful in descending."

Meantime, the king had gone down to explain matters, taking the basket and the cushion with him. As he expected, he found William Penderel, with Trusty Dick and John. All three were amazed to hear that a prisoner had been made. Though the task was by no means agreeable to them, Dick and John did not for a moment dispute his majesty's commands, but agreed to convey the trooper to a distance.

"We will conduct him to the roughest part of the wood and leave him there, to find his way out as he best can," said Dick.

"If he gets drowned in a pool, or stifled in a bog, it won't much matter," added John.

Madmannah reached the lowest branch in safety, but he then slipped down and fell to the ground. When he arose he was seized on either side by a vigorous grasp, while a stern voice—it was that of Dick—bade him come along, and keep silence.

"We have got thy pistols," added John, "and we will shoot thee through the head shouldst thou attempt to fly, or give the alarm. So take heed what thou art about."

They then marched off with the prisoner between them.

As soon as they were out of sight and hearing, William Penderel cautiously conducted the king and his companion to Boscobel House.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW CHARLES SLEPT IN THE SECRET CLOSET; AND HOW
CARELESS SLEPT IN A PRIEST'S HOLE IN THE GARRET.

AFTER the long and anxious day he had passed in the oak, it was with a feeling of indescribable satisfaction that Charles found himself once more in Boscobel House—not in the parlour into which he had been shown in the morning, but in the large comfortable hall—a couple of nicely roasted chickens before him, and Dame Joan in attendance. Careless, who was seated at the opposite side of the table, was quite as well pleased as his royal master, and both did justice to the repast provided for them. Charles, as we have already remarked,

possessed a happy temperament, that enabled him to cast off his cares, and with plenty to eat, and a flask of good wine within reach—to say nothing of a black-jack full of strong ale, he desired nothing better—and laughed heartily while recounting the many alarming incidents of the day to Joan.

“What trials your majesty must have gone through!” exclaimed the good dame, lifting up her hands. “The saints be praised that you are here to describe them.”

“I shouldn’t mind passing another day in the oak,” observed Charles, “if I were certain of having such a supper as this at the end of it. I trust the noble tree that has given me shelter may ’scape the woodman’s axe!”

Just then the door opened, and William Penderel entered, followed by his two brothers.

“William,” cried his wife, with irrepressible enthusiasm, “his majesty expects you and your brothers to protect the royal oak!”

“The royal oak!” cried William.

“Thy wife has so named the tree,” said the king, “and I approve the designation.”

"Then the royal oak it shall be called," cried William, sharing Joan's enthusiasm, as did his brothers.

"Pledge me in this cup of wine that you will protect the good old oak," cried Charles, drinking from the cup which he had just before filled, and handing it to William Penderel, who received it on his knees with the utmost respect.

"I pledge myself to preserve the royal oak, so far as lies in my power," he said, placing the cup to his lips.

When he had finished, each of his brothers knelt down, and drank the pledge solemnly.

"Your majesty may depend that the royal oak will be well protected," cried Joan.

"I doubt it not," said Charles. "Now tell me what you have done with the prisoner?" he added to Trusty Dick.

"We took him to Rock Coppice in Chillington Park," replied Dick, "and forced him to descend into a deep dry pit, from which he will find some difficulty in getting out."

"But he may know you again?" said Charles.

"No fear of that," said John. "We didn't

remove the bandage from his eyes, and disguised our voices. Here are his pistols."

"Give them to me," said William. "I may need them. I shall keep watch throughout the night."

"John and I will remain here likewise to relieve guard," said Dick; "so that his majesty may rest securely."

"No discovery was made when the house was searched by the enemy to-day? ha!" cried Charles.

"None whatever, sire," replied Joan. "Our lady be praised for misleading them."

"Where am I to be lodged, good dame?" asked Charles.

"There is a very fine old bed in the squire's room as we call it," replied Joan—"Squire Peter Giffard, and his father, ay, and his grandfather, Squire John Giffard, who built this house, have often slept in it—but I dare not offer it to your majesty."

"Lodge me where you will, good dame," replied the king, with manifest symptoms of fatigue. "I wish you all good night."

"Shall I attend your majesty?" said Careless.

Charles declined, and preceded by Joan, who carried a light, mounted an oak staircase, which sprang from the further end of the hall.

On arriving at the landing-place, his conductress opened the door of a good-sized apartment, in the midst of which stood a large old-fashioned bed, with rich, though faded curtains. The room, which had a most comfortable look in the eyes of the wearied monarch, was panelled with black oak, and partly hung with tapestry. On the walls were portraits of Sir Thomas Giffard, tenth Lord of Chillington, and his two spouses—Dorothy, daughter of Sir John Montgomery, of Caverswall, and Ursula, daughter of Sir Robert Throckmorton, of Coughton—both extremely handsome women.

Having drawn aside a piece of the arras opposite the foot of the bed, Joan opened a sliding panel in the wainscot, and a dark closet was then revealed.

“Is this the hiding-place?” asked Charles.

“Your majesty shall see,” she replied.

And she then opened another sliding panel at the back of the closet.

The aperture thus discovered admitted them to

a small square room, which evidently formed part of the projecting chimney-stack, and had small windows at the front and at either side, looking into the garden. It was evident from its position that the room stood over the porch.

"This cannot be a hiding-place," said Charles.

"Your majesty is right," replied Joan. "But it deceives the searchers."

She then drew back, and signing to the king to follow her, returned to the closet, and taking up a small mat in one corner, raised up a trap-door, so artfully contrived in the floor, that Charles could not detect it, and disclosed a small ladder, leading to a room beneath.

"There is the hiding-place," she said. "The small room below is built in the chimney, whence by a narrow staircase and a small postern covered with ivy, you can gain the garden, and from the garden may reach the wood, where you are safe."

"I understand," said the king, struck with the ingenuity of the contrivance.

"A pallet bed is made up in the lower room. The place is small and uncomfortable, but 'tis safe."

"That is the main point," cried Charles. "I must sacrifice comfort to security."

"The Earl of Derby slept here all the time he stayed at Boscobel," said Joan.

"Then I have no right to complain," cried Charles.

"Should any alarm occur I will run up-stairs instantly and make all secure," said Joan. "Holy Mary and all holy angels watch over your majesty!"

Charles then took the light from her, passed through the trap-door, and descended to the lower room.

Having carefully restored the panel to its place, Joan went down-stairs, and telling Careless she would find him a safe resting-place, led him to the upper floor of the house.

There was nothing whatever in the garret they had reached to indicate that it could be used for the purpose of concealment. The roof was so low that Careless could scarcely stand upright beneath it. Beyond it were other small rooms lighted by the gable windows. A straw mat was lying on the floor. This Joan removed and revealed a

trap-door, beneath which was a cavity about six or seven feet deep, profoundly dark, and only just large enough to hold a single person. So much did this "priest's hole," as it was called, resemble a cell, that Careless shuddered as he gazed into it. However, he made no complaint, but let himself down into the hole, which he found somewhat more roomy than he expected.

Joan handed him the lamp she had brought with her, and on looking round, he perceived that a pallet was laid at the bottom of the recess, but nothing more than a blanket and a pillow were provided.

"I must perform this act of penance for my sins," cried Careless. "But I am so sleepy that I do not think I shall pass the night in prayer like the holy men who have previously sought refuge here. I do not require the light, good dame," he added, giving back the lamp to her. "But I pray you not to close the trap-door, for I feel as if I should be suffocated in this hole."

"Colonel Roscarrock slept two or three nights in the priest's hole," replied Joan; "and he chose to have the trap-door shut, judging it safer. But

your honour's instructions shall be carefully attended to, and the lamp shall be left on the table. I wish you good night."

No sooner was she gone than Careless laid himself down upon the pallet, and notwithstanding the confined space, and the general discomfort of the priest's hole, so greatly was he fatigued, that he immediately fell fast asleep.

CHAPTER X.

IN WHICH THE KING PROVES HIMSELF A GOOD COOK.

ALL passed quietly that night at Bóscobel. Charles slept soundly in the secret closet ; and Careless slept equally soundly in the priest's hole. The faithful brothers kept watch, by turns, outside the house, and Joan did not go to bed at all, but took a little repose in an arm-chair in the squire's bedchamber. Careless awoke at an early hour in the morning, and left the garret as quickly as he could. Finding the king was not astir, he did not choose to disturb him, but went forth into the garden. After strolling about for a few minutes, he proceeded to the little mount we

have already described, and entered the arbour on its summit. What was his surprise to find some one asleep there. It was Jasper, who was roused by Careless's approach, and opened his eyes.

"You here!" exclaimed Careless.

"I have not been long here," said the page. "I have been hidden in the forest, and have had several narrow escapes of capture."

"Both his majesty and myself have been most anxious for your safety," said Careless. "You look sadly tired."

"Fasting does not very well agree with me," replied Jasper. "One cannot find much to eat in the forest. I have had nothing for nearly twenty-four hours, and I find myself particularly hungry, I can assure you."

"No wonder," cried Careless, in a sympathising tone. "Come with me into the house, and I will get you some breakfast at once."

"The offer is too welcome to be refused—though I confess I have some scruples. What will his majesty think of me?"

"His majesty will be delighted to see you—but he has not yet left his couch."

What more passed between them we do not pretend to say, but they remained within the arbour for another minute or so, and then descending from the mount proceeded with very leisurely footsteps towards the porch.

“How strange is this meeting!” murmured Careless. “Never did I dream we should be here together.”

“’Tis a charming old place, I think, and I could be quite happy here for a month, if those Roundhead soldiers wouldn’t molest me.”

They were now not far from the porch, when a rustling was heard among the ivy that clothed the base of the chimney-stack, and the next moment the king came forth from the secret postern.

Jasper was quite startled by the sudden apparition, for so well concealed was the outlet that it could scarcely be detected, even when the observers were close at hand.

Charles smiled at the page’s look of astonishment.

“You are not familiar with the wonders of this

enchanted castle," he said. "But, i'faith, I should not have ventured forth if I had not reconnoitred you through a loophole."

"I hope your majesty has rested well," said the page, with an obeisance.

"Never better," replied Charles. "I made one long nap of it. Where did you find a couch?"

"Partly at the foot of a tree, sire, and partly in yonder arbour, where Major Careless found me a few minutes ago."

"Oddsfish! then you have passed the night in the forest?"

"Precisely so, sire."

"And I fear without supper?"

"Supper would have been superfluous, if I had dined."

"Careless, we must have breakfast instantly," cried Charles. "Let me know when it is ready."

"Come with me, Jasper, thou may'st be needed."

"No: Jasper will remain with me. I want to talk to him."

Careless rather reluctantly departed.

The king then began to question the page as to his adventures in the forest, but had not learnt all particulars, when Careless came back.

"Oddsfish! thou hast made haste," exclaimed Charles.

"Dame Joan desires to know what it will please your majesty to have for breakfast."

"Didst tell her I have company?"

"I explained that there is a hungry page with your majesty, and she thought he had best come in and render help."

"Willingly," cried Jasper.

"Nay, we will all go in," said Charles.

Active preparations for the morning meal were being made in the hall as the king entered with his attendants.

A large fire was burning in the grate, at which Dame Joan was roasting a brace of partridges, that emitted a very delectable odour.

"Nothing can be better than those birds, dame, unless it be a broiled mutton-chop?" he cried.

"There is a neck of mutton in the larder, an'

please your majesty, but I fear the meat may prove too fresh," replied Joan.

"Heed not that," cried Charles. "Mutton-chops are the very thing. I will broil them myself. Bring me the gridiron, dame."

Very much amused by the order, Joan obeyed, and the chops being duly prepared, were skilfully broiled by the king, who never for a moment quitted his post, but turned them with a fork when requisite.

While he was thus employed, William Penderel came in, and could scarcely believe his eyes when he found the king standing before the fire. But the faithful fellow did not remain long in-doors, for he was now left alone for a time, his brothers having gone to their homes.

Having completed his task to his entire satisfaction, and the infinite amusement of the lookers-on, Charles proceeded to the head of the table, and bidding Careless and the page sit down on either side of him, the chops were served by Joan, and greatly enjoyed. Charles insisted that

the good dame should taste his cookery, but she would touch nothing till she had served the partridges. She then discussed the chop at the lower end of the table, and declared, no doubt with truth, that she had never tasted aught so good in her life.

CHAPTER XI.

WHAT BROUGHT FATHER HUDDLESTONE TO BOSCOBEL.

AFTER breakfast, Charles, attended by Careless, went out into the garden, and having previously consulted William Penderel, who did not seek to dissuade him from the step, visited the oak, and remained for a long time contemplating it with mingled gratitude and admiration. How majestic looked the tree on that morning! Before quitting it Charles spread his arms round its trunk in a loving embrace.

On returning to the garden, Charles proceeded to the arbour, and sat down within it. So pleasant was the spot, that for a short time he

surrendered himself to the enjoyment of the moment, and sank into a calm reverie, from which he was rather rudely disturbed by the sound of approaching footsteps, and looking out he saw Father Huddleston, accompanied by Careless. Greeting the priest with much respect, he met him at the top of the mount, and led him into the harbour, graciously praying him to be seated.

“All good saints bless your majesty!” exclaimed the priest, “and guard you from your enemies. I have just come from Moseley Hall, and am the bearer of a message to your majesty from Lord Wilmot. His lordship is in great anxiety on your majesty’s account—very alarming reports having reached him, which I am glad to find are unfounded, and he implores you to come on to Moseley Hall, where he feels sure you will be safe. To his lordship’s entreaties I would add those of my patron, Mr. Whitgreave, who places his house at your disposal, and has means, almost better than any other person, of offering you a secure asylum at this dangerous juncture. To these entreaties, my gracious liege,” continued the

good priest, earnestly, "I will add my own. Do not remain here too long. Your enemies have been temporarily baffled in their quest, but I fear they will renew it, since their obstinacy is great."

The king listened attentively to what was said to him.

"I intended to remain here for a few days, holy father, till the danger should be blown over," he said. "But I perceive there is too much risk in doing so. Loth, therefore, as I am to leave Boscobel, I will come to Moseley Hall to-night."

"Your majesty has determined well," said Father Huddleston. "But I entreat you to take a sufficient guard with you. The forest is full of rebel troopers. No doubt the trusty Penderels will guard you."

"I can count upon them," replied Charles.

"I will speak with William Penderel myself, before I depart," said the priest.

"Do you depart soon, father?"

"Almost immediately, sire. I return by Chillington."

"Then come in at once and take some refreshment."

And rising as he spoke, the king led the way to the house.

As the king and Father Huddleston walked on, they perceived Careless and the page leaning from an open lattice window to the room on the ground floor. Thus seen they formed a very pretty picture. On his majesty's approach they would have drawn back, but he marched up to the window to speak to them.

"A change has taken place in my plans," he said. "Father Huddleston is returning immediately to Moseley Hall. You must both go with him."

"And leave you here, sire?" cried Careless. "I do not like the arrangement at all. But, of course, I must obey your majesty's orders."

"If all goes well, I shall rejoin you to-morrow at Moseley," said the king. "I shall travel at night, and with a sufficient escort."

"But why am I not to form one of your majesty's escort?" asked Careless.

"Because you are wanted elsewhere," replied Charles, smiling.

“Well, since it must be, it must,” said Careless. “But your majesty may wish me at your side.”

While Charles was thus conversing, the good priest entered the house, and finding Joan and her husband in the hall, paused for a moment at the open door, and bestowed a benediction upon them. They received him with the greatest respect. William placed a chair for him, and Joan quickly brought him some refreshment. While this was going on, the good father briefly explained the purport of his message to the king, and though the faithful pair were grieved to lose their important charge, they raised no objection.

At this juncture Charles came in.

“My good friends,” he said, “I perceive from your countenances that Father Huddleston has told you I must leave you. Never shall I forget your kindness to me, and I desire to express my gratitude in the good father’s presence.”

“Your feelings do you honour, my liege,” said Father Huddleston, rising. “Your majesty may rest assured that you have not more devoted

subjects than the Penderels. As to Dame Joan——”

“Her price is above rubies,” interrupted the king. “I know it. Be seated, I pray, your reverence, and heed not my presence. I have more hard work for you, William, and for your trusty brothers. To-night you must all escort me to Moseley Hall.”

“We will all be ready, my liege, and shall account it no hardship,” replied William. “We will take with us our brother-in-law, Francis Yates. We can trust him as we can trust ourselves.”

“The husband of the good woman who visited me in Spring Coppice?” observed Charles.

“The same, sire.”

“Then he is well mated,” said the king.

“You must all go armed, William,” remarked Father Huddleston, gravely—“armed, and prepared to resist to the death. I warn you there is danger.”

“We will go fully prepared for any event,” rejoined William Penderel, resolutely. “We cannot do better than die for the king.”

"That is a sentiment I have always inculcated," said the father.

"And I have not forgotten it, your reverence." Then turning to the king, he added, "I will bid Humphrey bring his horse for your majesty. Moseley Hall is a long way off, and your majesty looks somewhat footsore."

"Oddsfish! I could not walk half a dozen miles without falling dead lame," cried Charles. "By all means let me have Humphrey's nag."

Soon afterwards, Careless and the page, neither of whom had any preparations to make, came in to bid adieu to Joan and her worthy spouse; and Father Huddleston, declaring he was sufficiently rested and refreshed, rose to depart.

Before bidding adieu to Careless, the king gave him some instructions in private, saying, as he left him at the garden gate,

"If we do not meet again, you will know what to do."

Charles did not wait for any reply, but, as if afraid of betraying the emotion he felt, walked quickly towards the arbour. On gaining the summit of the mount, he looked round and saw

that Father Huddlestone and his two companions were gazing anxiously at him from the skirts of the wood. Waving his hand to them, he entered the arbour, and was for some time lost in painful reflection.

End of Book the Third.

Book the Fourth.**MOSELEY OLD HALL.**

CHAPTER I.**CHILLINGTON HOUSE.**

FATHER HUDDLESTONE being as well acquainted with the paths through the forest as the Penderels themselves, took his companions through the thickest part of it, where they were not likely to encounter a patrol of the enemy, and brought them safely to Chillington Park.

They were now at the lower end of the long

and beautiful avenue leading to the ancient mansion, but before proceeding further, the priest deemed it advisable to consult the old gatekeeper, who dwelt in the lodge adjoining the entrance of the park.

Like all the old retainers of the Giffards, John Eccleshall, the gate-keeper, was a Roman Catholic, and consequently devoted to Father Huddlestone. He informed the priest that there was no danger whatever in his entering the park, since Colonel James, with the whole of his troopers, had evacuated the hall.

“Heaven be thanked the rogues are gone to Brewood!” said the old man. “Not one is left behind. I counted them as they passed through the gate.”

While Father Huddlestone was talking with the gate-keeper, Jasper’s curiosity was excited by an old wooden cross standing in a small green inclosure near the lodge, and in answer to his inquiries as to why it had been placed there, the priest related the following legend :

“That is called Giffard’s Cross,” said Father Huddlestone, “and it was set up in old times by

Sir John Giffard. Sir John, who was excessively fond of the chase, kept a collection of wild beasts, and amongst them a very beautiful, but very fierce panther, which he valued more than all the rest. One day, it chanced that this savage animal slipped out of its cage, and escaped into the park. Made aware of what had happened by the cries of his terrified household, Sir John snatched up an arbalist, and rushed out into the park, accompanied by his eldest son. He easily ascertained the direction taken by the panther, for the beast had been seen to skirt the avenue. At that time there were no gates here, and the limits of the park extended far beyond the place where we are now standing. Sir John and his son ran as swiftly as they could, and were still speeding on, when they beheld a young woman and a child coming along the road. At the same moment, they discovered the panther couched amid the fern, evidently waiting for his prey. Sir John and his son had halted, and though the distance was almost too great, the old knight prepared to launch a bolt at the beast. But while he was adjusting his cross-bow, his son remarked that he

was out of breath, and fearing he might miss his aim from this cause, called out to him in French, '*Prenez haleine, tirez fort.*' By this time the poor young woman had perceived her peril, and uttering a loud shriek, clasped her child to her breast, and essayed to fly. It may be by the interposition of holy Hubert," continued the priest, reverently, "whose aid Sir John invoked, that she was saved. Just as the panther was about to spring, the bolt flew, and was lodged in the animal's brain. On the spot where the mortally-wounded beast rolled on the ground, this memorial was placed. Thenceforward, also, Sir John Giffard adopted as his motto the words of counsel addressed to him by his son."

Having concluded his legend, with which Jasper was much edified, the good priest bestowed his benediction on the old gate-keeper, and the party entered the park, and proceeded along the avenue.

Viewed at a distance, Chillington House, with its grand façade, its immense oriel windows, its gables, turrets, and noble entrance porch, looked as imposing as ever, but on a nearer approach, the damage done to the mansion could be per-

fectly distinguished. Built by Sir John Giffard in the early part of the reign of Henry VIII., on the site of a still older edifice, Chillington House had long been kept up in magnificent style by its owners. But the Giffards were gone now, and their ancient residence being in the hands of the Parliamentary commissioners, was allowed to go to ruin. Now and then it afforded quarters to a detachment of soldiers, who took possession of it, without authority, and did an infinitude of mischief.

The old mansion was approached by an extremely picturesque avenue of mingled oaks and hollies, and it was along this beautiful avenue, in 1576, that Queen Elizabeth rode, attended by a splendid cortége, when she visited John Giffard, grandson of the builder of the mansion.

At that time, the park, which was of vast extent, was well stocked with deer, for the old lords of Chillington were great hunters. At the rear of the mansion the park extended to Codsall, and in this part there were several large pools, of which a more particular description will be given hereafter. At a subsequent period these

pools were joined together, and now form a large and beautiful lake. Attached to the house were stables that might have befitted a palace, and these were spared by the troopers, who spared nothing else about the place, because they found them convenient.

Placed on a rising ground, Chillington House not only looked down the long avenue we have described, but commanded an extensive prospect over a beautifully wooded country. Familiar with this lovely view, Careless turned round for a few minutes to gaze at it, but it was with very different feelings that he surveyed the ancient mansion. How changed was it since he beheld it last ! As his eye ran over the front of the once proud structure, he noted the injuries it had sustained—windows shattered—architectural ornaments mutilated, or thrown down—the smooth lawns trampled over—the terrace grass-grown. Yawning wide, the great entrance door revealed the havoc that had taken place within.

Careless and the priest exchanged mournful glances as they walked towards the house, but not a word passed between them. The great hall

which they entered was a complete wreck—its beautifully carved oak screen having been ruthlessly destroyed. The sculptured armorial bearings on the grand oak staircase were likewise irreparably injured. Nothing that hatchet could mutilate was spared.

“Have you seen enough?” inquired the priest.

“No,” replied Careless, “I would fain see what these vindictive miscreants can do when they are under no restraint. Come with me, father. Wait for us here, Jasper.”

Accompanied by Father Huddleston he then ascended the great oak staircase, and they proceeded to examine the long gallery and the numerous apartments connected with it, all of which were marked by the hand of the ruthless destroyer.

“What would Peter Giffard say if he could behold his house?” remarked Careless. “It would break his stout heart—if, indeed, his heart is not already broken.”

“He bears his misfortunes bravely,” said Father Huddleston. “But the king’s defeat at Wor-

cester will be a greater blow to him than the worst of his own losses."

" Ah ! if we Royalists had but won that battle, father," cried Careless ; " we should soon have enjoyed our own again ! But we must now wait for many a long day."

" I fear so, my son," replied the priest. " But I trust in the justice of Heaven !"

Meanwhile Jasper, tired by his walk, had sought a seat among the broken furniture scattered about. Discovering an old arm-chair, he threw himself into it and fell asleep almost immediately.

Having completed their survey of the upper rooms, Careless and the priest were about to descend, but while passing through the gallery they chanced to look out of a window, and, to their infinite dismay, perceived a small party of dragoons, with an officer at their head, riding quickly towards the house.

There was time enough to save themselves by a hasty retreat, but not a moment to lose. Careless rushed to the head of the great staircase, and called out to Jasper that the enemy was at

hand, bidding him fly to the back of the house, and make his way out.

Feeling certain that the page heard him, and would instantly attend to the warning, he gave himself no further concern, but followed Father Huddlestone down a back staircase. Luckily, there was nothing to prevent their egress—the doors being all unfastened—and they were soon in the court-yard.

Here they waited for a few moments for Jasper, expecting he would join them, but he came not. Careless now became seriously alarmed, and his uneasiness was increased by some sounds that seemed to announce the arrival of the troopers. Despite Father Huddlestone's entreaties he re-entered the house, but presently came back, and with a look of anguish exclaimed :

“Too late! The troopers have already entered—he must be captured!”

“Nay, then, we must save ourselves if we can,” cried Father Huddlestone. “Let us make for the wood.”

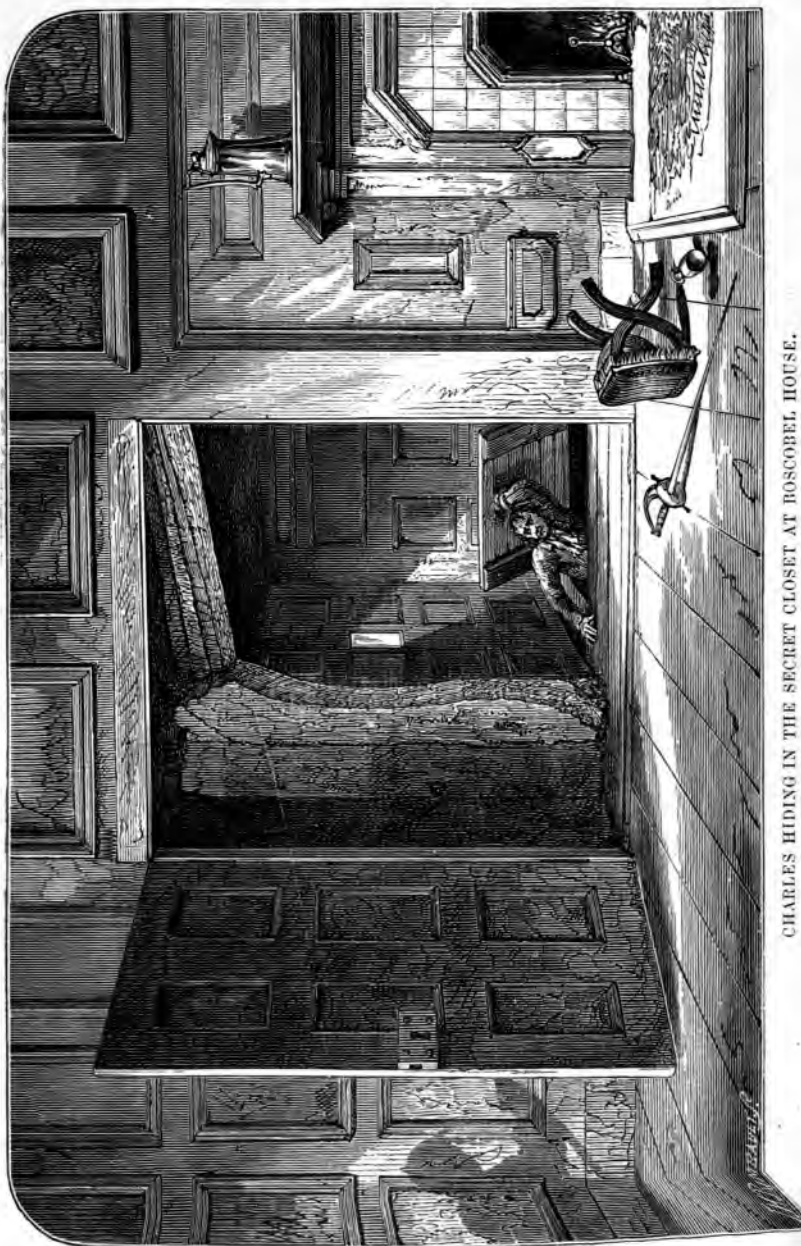
They had scarcely quitted the court-yard when three or four troopers rode into it.

CHAPTER II.

HOW THE KING WAS WELL-NIGH CAPTURED BY MADMANNAH.

SEATED in the harbour, to which he had retired on the departure of Father Huddlestone and his companions, Charles endeavoured to review his position calmly.

His great desire had been to remain at Boscobel till the vigilance of his enemies should relax, and an opportunity of reaching the coast might occur to him, but after Father Huddlestone's earnest representations of the great risk he would run, he felt the necessity of seeking another hiding-place, and where could a more secure retreat be found than was offered by Moseley Old Hall?



CHARLES HIDING IN THE SECRET CLOSET AT ROSCOBEL HOUSE.



Mr. Whitgreave, the owner of the mansion, belonged to the old religion, and the unfortunate monarch had learnt from recent experience that those who had proved most faithful to him in his hour of peril were Roman Catholics. Besides, Father Huddleston had given him positive assurance of the fidelity of Mr. Whitgreave's household. There was no risk, therefore, of betrayal. The great danger lay in the journey. If he could only reach Moseley Old Hall in safety all would be well.

Still, he felt reluctant to quit Boscobel. The Penderels had completely won his regard. Their devotion had impressed him deeply, and he well knew that men so honest and trusty, and possessed of such good sound sense, were rarely to be met with. Having been thrown so much into their company—especially into that of Trusty Dick—he knew them more intimately than he had ever done persons in their humble station, and he formed a very high and perfectly just opinion of their worth.

Naturally, the uppermost thought in his mind was how to reach the coast, and procure a vessel

to convey him to France, and he was considering how he could best accomplish his object, when the sound of quick footsteps on the gravel-walk leading to the mount caught his ear. He immediately looked forth, and saw it was Trusty Dick, who had come to warn him.

"Your majesty must not stay here any longer," said the faithful fellow. "The enemy is at hand."

On hearing this Charles hurried to the house, where he found William Penderel and his wife in great consternation, for they had just learnt from Dick that Colonel James, being dissatisfied with the result of the first investigation, was about to make another search of the house, and was coming thither with his troopers.

"I will again take refuge in the oak," cried Charles. "I shall be safe amid its branches."

"There is not time to reach the tree," said Dick, who could not conceal his uneasiness. "Besides, that rascally trooper whom your majesty made a prisoner is with them."

"You must hide in the secret closet, my liege, or in the priest's hole," said Joan.

"There are other hiding-places," added William

Penderel, "but none so secure as the secret closet in the chimney. Go thither at once, sire, I entreat you. There is not a moment to lose."

"I must not be found here," cried Trusty Dick, "my presence would excite suspicion. But I shall not be far off."

Snatching up a sword that had been left for him by Careless, Charles hurried up-stairs, and opened the door of the secret closet. While he was thus employed, he fancied he heard some one in the adjoining chamber, and at once flew to the trap-door, and let himself down into the lower chamber. In his haste, he had left the sword lying on the floor of the bedroom, and had upset a fauteuil—and, worst of all, he had left the door of the secret closet open—but he felt sure Joan would quickly follow and put all right.

And so she would have done, had she not been prevented. How great was her terror, on entering the bedchamber, to see a trooper standing there, amid all these evidences of the king's hasty retreat.

The trooper she beheld was Madmannah. He had got into the house through an open window, and had made his way privily up-stairs. Placing

his pike at her breast, he ordered her instantly to quit the room, and she did not dare to disobey.

Casting an anxious glance at the accusing sword, but still hoping the trap-door might not be discovered, Joan went down to the hall, where another scene of terror awaited her.

Colonel James was interrogating her husband, who was standing before the stern Republican leader with a trooper on either side of him. Ezra, who was stationed at the foot of the staircase, allowed her to enter the hall, but bade her hold her tongue. Colonel James was seated near the table. His aspect was unusually severe, but William Penderel did not quail before his menacing looks. The forester's gigantic figure dwarfed the troopers who stood on either side of him.

"I know thou art a stubborn knave," said Colonel James ; "but I will wrest the truth from thee. I am certain that Charles Stuart is concealed within this house, and I mean not to depart without him. But I will not waste time in the search. Thy life is already forfeited for thy treasonable conduct, and I should be justified in

putting thee to death ; but I will spare thee, if, without more ado, the malignant prince be delivered up to me. Nay, more, I will reward thee. Dost hear me, sirrah ?” he continued, finding that his words produced no visible impression upon the prisoner. “ I am not one to be trifled with, as thou wilt find.”

As he spoke, he arose, strode towards the prisoner, and drawing a pistol from his belt, placed it at Penderel’s head.

“ Speak the truth, or thou art a dead man,” he said. “ Where is the prince ?”

This was too much for Joan. She could not stand by and see her husband shot. Rushing forward, she besought the fierce Republican leader to spare him.

“ A word from thee will save his life,” said Colonel James, lowering the pistol and turning towards her.

“ Woman, I forbid you to speak,” said William Penderel, sternly.

“ Shoot me if you will,” cried Joan to the Republican leader, “ I have nothing to declare. Charles Stuart is not here.”

"That is false," exclaimed Colonel James. "Deliver him to me, or ye shall both die. Your treasonable practices are known to me. I am aware that the fugitive prince and one of his attendants were concealed in an oak hard by this house. Where are they? They cannot have escaped."

"Wherefore not?" rejoined William Penderel. "If, as you assert, they were hidden in an oak, they could not be here. Search the house, and if you find him you seek, then put us to death."

Finding he could not intimidate the resolute forester, Colonel James left him in charge of a couple of troopers, with orders to shoot him if he attempted to escape, and commanded Joan to conduct him over the house.

"If Charles Stuart be found hidden within the house, thou and thy husband shall assuredly die," he said. "But if it be as thou affirmest, I will spare you both."

"Where will you begin the search?" inquired Joan.

"I will leave no room unvisited," replied

Colonel James. "But I will first examine the bedchambers."

Joan's heart quaked as the stern officer marched up-stairs and proceeded to the principal bedroom. Colonel James was astonished by finding Madmannah standing in the midst of the room, leaning on his pike, with the door of the secret closet wide open.

"Hast thou found the malignant prince?" he exclaimed.

"Yea, verily, colonel, I have discovered his hiding-place, as you perceive," replied Madmannah. "There is the stool on which he sometime sat—there is the cup from which he drank—above all, there is his sword. I have waited for you to make further search, that you may have the credit of the capture. But I claim the reward."

"Thou shalt have it," replied Colonel James, stepping into the closet.

He saw at a glance that it was empty, but feeling sure there must be some secret recess, he struck the panels on either side with the pommel of his sword, but discovering nothing, he at last

turned to Joan, who was standing by watching his proceedings with ill-disguised anxiety, and remarked :

“There must be a hiding-place here. Disclose it at once, or I will cause my men to break down the panels.”

Joan obeyed, drew back the sliding door, and Colonel James instantly sprang through the aperture into the inner room.

Finding no one within it, he vented his disappointment in an angry exclamation.

“Where is the malignant prince, woman?” he demanded, fiercely.

“Gone,” she replied. “That is all I will tell you.”

“Thou art deceiving me, woman,” he exclaimed.

But finding threats useless, he proceeded to make a very careful investigation of the little room in which they stood. Had he searched the outer closet with equal strictness he must infallibly have discovered the trap-door.

Dreadfully frightened, Joan had great difficulty in supporting herself, and it was an inexpressible

relief to her when Colonel James strode back into the bedchamber.'

"'Tis plain the malignant prince is not here, Madmannah," he said to the trooper, who seemed greatly disappointed by the result of the search.

"I could have sworn I heard him," said Madmannah. "But there are other hiding-places in the house. Answer truthfully, on your life, woman," he added to Joan.

"I will conceal nothing," she replied, anxious to get them away. "There is a priest's hole in the garret."

"A priest's hole!" exclaimed Colonel James. "Show it to me."

Joan took them to the garret, raised the trap-door, and displayed the cavity.

After peering into the hole, Colonel James ordered Madmannah, who had followed him, to descend and examine it. Not without difficulty did the trooper, who was rather stout, obey his leader's injunction. But once in the hole, he found it impossible to get out, and had to take off his breast-plate before he could be extricated from his unpleasant position. He had found nothing, for

the pallet on which Careless slept had been removed.

Enraged at his ill-success, Colonel James then went down-stairs, and searched the parlour, the windows of which have been described as looking into the garden. His investigations were rewarded by the discovery of the little altar in the oratory, and offended by the sight of it, he caused it to be destroyed.

After this, he again tried the effect of menaces upon William Penderel, but found the stout forester as stubborn as ever. Nothing could be extorted from him.

At last, after a long and fruitless search, the baffled Republican leader took his departure, and the faithful pair, who had passed an hour of the greatest anxiety, congratulated each other on their escape.

Not till she was quite satisfied that the troopers were gone did Joan venture to release the king from his confinement. He had heard the footsteps of Colonel James in the closet overhead, and thought that the trap-door must be discovered. Had he not feared that a guard must be stationed

outside, he would have attempted to escape into the forest.

Now that the danger was passed he laughed at it. But though he made light of his own fears, he did not underrate the risk incurred on his account by stout-hearted William Penderel and his devoted wife.

Later on, Trusty Dick made his appearance. It appeared that the faithful fellow had resolved, if the king had been captured by Colonel James, to rescue him or perish in the attempt; and with this view he had hastily assembled his brothers—John, Humphrey, and George, together with his brother-in-law, Francis Yates.

Armed with pikes and bills, they had laid in wait for the troopers, near the house, but as the men came forth without their prey, and had evidently failed in their design, the devoted little band separated, and each man hurried back to his abode—George to White Ladies, John to his little farm, Humphrey to the mill, and Francis Yates to his cottage—rejoicing that their services had not been required.

“But before parting,” said Dick, in conclusion,

“we all agreed to meet here to-night to escort your majesty to Moseley Old Hall.”

From this simple statement, Charles comprehended how well he was guarded over by these brave and loyal brothers.

CHAPTER III.

HOW THE KING RODE THE MILLER'S HORSE; AND HOW HE
WAS ESCORTED DURING HIS RIDE.

As it was not likely, after the strict search that had just taken place, that another visit would be paid to Boscobel by the troopers, Charles felt quite easy, and passed the remainder of the day in tranquil meditation.

While sitting by himself in the oak parlour, he revolved his plans for the future, should he be happily restored to his kingdom, and formed many noble resolutions which would have greatly elevated his character as a sovereign if they had been carried out.

At this period of his career Charles was unspoiled, and if his higher qualities had been called into play, and his unquestionable military genius fully developed, he might have proved himself worthy of his grandsire, on his mother's side, the great Henry the Fourth of France.

Above all, his heart was uncorrupted and his kindly disposition had not hardened into selfishness. His natural gaiety never deserted him, and his constitutional indifference to danger sustained him under the most trying circumstances. Possible perils were never allowed to weigh upon his mind, and in thus acting he showed true philosophy. His unconcern astonished all who came near him, and Joan and her husband could not sufficiently admire his liveliness of manner. Whether he was quite so free from anxiety as he appeared may be questioned, but at any rate he wore a very pleasant mask.

To such a point did he carry his rashness, that at the risk of being seen by an enemy on the watch, he strolled forth into the garden, and sat for some time in the little arbour.

As soon as it grew dusk, and they could steal

through the forest unperceived, the king's promised escort began to appear; each stout fellow being armed with pike or bill, as he had been in the morning, when the brave little band had resolved to effect Charles's rescue.

First to arrive was James Yates, who had married a sister of the Penderels. The king had seen him before, as he had served under Charles Giffard, at Worcester, and had guided the royal fugitive to White Ladies. James Yates was stoutly made, and had a soldier-like bearing, but he was not so largely proportioned as his brothers-in-law. However, he was as loyal as they were, and just as ready to shed his blood in the good cause. We grieve to say that he suffered for his loyalty, being executed at a subsequent date at Chester. Charles was very glad to see him, and possibly the gracious words then addressed to him by the king may have cheered the brave fellow's latest moments.

Ere long the others arrived, and now that they were all assembled, armed and accoutred in the best way they could, Charles thought he had never seen a finer set of men.

“ With such a body-guard I shall not fear the enemy,” he said.

“ Your majesty shall not be taken, while we can defend you,” they cried with one voice.

“ I hope you have brought your horse for me, Humphrey ?” said the king.

“ Ay, sire,” replied the sturdy miller. “ Robin is already in the barn.”

“ ’Tis well !” cried Charles. “ Now sit down to supper, and mind me not.”

The king had already supped, and supped very heartily, for his misfortunes had not taken away his appetite, but his majesty ate little in comparison with those who followed him.

It was wonderful to see how quickly the heaped up trenchers were cleared, and how soon the tall tankard of ale was emptied. But the trenchers were filled again, and so was the tall tankard, though only to be emptied once more. Luckily, there was enough and to spare, for Joan knew the powers of her guests, and had provided accordingly.

When the plain but plentiful repast was ended, and the horn cups were filled for the last time, the

stalwart brethren arose, and drank the king's health and confusion to his enemies; after which, William Penderel asked pardon for the freedom they had taken, and declared the impulse was uncontrollable, adding that whenever it pleased his majesty to set forth they were ready to attend him.

Charles sighed, for he was unwilling to depart.

However, there was no help. So he took leave of Dame Joan, expressing his deep sense of the great services she and her husband had rendered him, and promising to reward them adequately, if he should ever be able to do so.

"I have every belief that a time will come, when I shall be able to prove my gratitude to you, my good dame, and to your worthy husband—indeed, to all my good friends and servants whom I see around me, and then be sure that I will not forget you, one and all. Trust to my royal word."

"We want no reward, my liege," said William Penderel. "What we have done has been from pure devotion to your majesty, and from no sordid motive."

"That is quite true," cried the others. "and we entreat your majesty to believe what William says."

"I firmly believe it," said the king. "Loyal and disinterested you must be, or you would never serve a fugitive king, who can reward you only with promises. But I shall not forget your services—yours, especially, my good dame. And now adieu," he added, taking Joan's hand, and preventing her from making the profound obeisance she meditated. "We shall meet again in happier days."

So saying, he quitted the house by the back door, followed by William Penderel and his sturdy brothers and brother-in-law.

The miller's horse—a short, well set, strong animal, which in these days would be described as a stout cob—was brought out of the barn by his master, who held the bridle while the king mounted.

Meantime, Joan had come forth with a lantern, and its light showed a curious scene—all the stalwart brothers, armed with their bills and pikes, grouped around the king, who was now in

the saddle—while William Penderel was arranging the order of march.

With the king's approval, it was settled that Humphrey and John should form the advanced guard, while the rear should be brought up by George Penderel and Francis Yates. William and Trusty Dick were to march on either side of his majesty, who was well pleased to have their companionship, as they were his favourites. Till this moment Charles had not formed an exact notion of William Penderel's height, and he was surprised to find that the gigantic forester stood on a level with him, though he himself was seated on the mill-horse.

Before the little band got into the order of march, William Penderel said to his brothers, in deep impressive accents which vibrated through the king's breast, and moved him greatly :

“His majesty needs no assurance of our fidelity. Nevertheless, since he has deigned to choose us as his guards, let us swear by all we hold sacred to defend him to the last, and against all odds.”

“We swear it,” cried the others. “We will die before harm shall befall him.”

Charles thanked them earnestly for their zeal, adding that he well knew their oath would be kept.

The brave little band then quitted the yard in the order prescribed.

Proud of the trust reposed in them, the loyal brothers almost hoped that their fidelity might be proved. Woe to any rebel patrol that might attempt to stop them ! In addition to their wood-bills, William and Trusty Dick had each a pistol—taken from Madmannah. But it was not in their weapons, but in their stout hearts, and strong thews and sinews, that Charles had the greatest reliance. Perhaps, no monarch ever had such an escort as he now possessed in those hardy foresters.

Just as Charles rode out of the yard with a guard on either side, he saw Dame Joan standing at the door with the lantern in her hand, straining her eyes through the gloom, and shouted an adieu to her. This was the last he beheld of the faithful creature.

After passing some outbuildings, the party came in front of the house, which presented a long

irregular outline. The night was not dark, for the moon, then in its first quarter, had just risen, and its beams illumined the gables and black and white chequer-work of the old hunting-lodge.

Not without emotion did Charles contemplate the huge fantastic chimney-stack, in the recesses of which he had been hidden; while the little harbour, which next caught his eye, excited a different kind of interest. Mentally he bade farewell to a spot which he felt would always have interest for him. Yet strange to say, though he often spoke of Boscobel in after times, he never revisited the house.

"Take me past the oak," he said to Trusty Dick. "I desire to see the tree once more."

Word to this effect was given to those in advance, but they had anticipated his majesty's wishes, and intended to take him past the royal oak.

Shortly afterwards the party halted beside the noble tree. How beautiful it looked at that hour! its summit silvered by the moonlight, while a few beams found their way through openings in the branches, and fell upon the massive stem. Charles was enchanted.

“Truly that is a royal tree!” he thought. “How majestic it looks among the oaks that surround it, though they are all noble trees, and how it lords it over them—like a king among his peers!” He then added aloud to Trusty Dick, “But for you, my good friend, I should not have made acquaintance with this grand old tree, and I should therefore have lost some of the happiest moments of my life, for though in great jeopardy, I was never happier than during my day’s sojourn in the oak; and if I am spared I shall ever look back to the time with satisfaction. Farewell, old tree!” he added. “May I spend another happy day amid thy friendly boughs!”

He then moved on, and the party took their way through a thicket, where the moon’s radiance being intercepted by the branches overhead, it was so dark that they could not see many yards before them, and they had to proceed with great caution—the advanced guard halting ever and anon. But nothing occurred to cause them alarm.

At length they reached an opening in the wood, and a broad moonlit glade lay before them, but they hesitated to cross it, and kept among the

trees; and the prudence of the step was shown a few minutes afterwards, when a patrol, whom they must infallibly have encountered had they gone straight on, appeared on the lawn.

The sight of the enemy aroused the choler of the loyal brothers, and Humphrey expressed a strong desire to give the knaves a drubbing, but, of course, he was not allowed to gratify his inclination.

There were no witnesses of the passage of the king and his companions through the forest—but had there been, the sight would have been worth viewing. Those dark gigantic figures indistinctly seen among the trees looked strange and mysterious. And when the party issued forth into some more open spot not overhung by boughs, so that the moonlight fell upon them and cast their black shadows on the ground, they looked still more unearthly. Despite the peril to which he was exposed, and the many difficulties and hindrances he had to undergo, the king enjoyed the ride. He would have enjoyed it still more if the horse he bestrode had been less rough of motion. But his majesty's seat in the saddle was far from easy.

At last he lost all patience, and exclaimed :

“ Plague take thy horse, Humphrey ! Never before was I so jolted.”

But his good humour was instantly restored by the miller’s ready response.

“ Generally, Robin goes well enough,” said Humphrey. “ But your majesty must consider that he has now got the weight of three kingdoms on his back.”

Charles laughed, and made no further complaint.

CHAPTER IV.

WHERE THE KING FOUND JASPER.

NOT long afterwards, they reached Chillington Park, but they did not enter it as Father Huddleston and his companions had done by the avenue gate, but at the back of the hall where the wood was thickest.

This part of the park was overrun with bushes, and it was here, in Rock's Coppice, as it was called, that the dry pit was situated to which Madmannah had been brought. They forced their way, not without some difficulty, through this broad barrier of brushwood, and then a most

charming scene burst upon them for which the king was not at all prepared—having heard no description of it.

At the bottom of a long and deep valley, which constituted the most beautiful feature of the park, were several large pools. In later times these pools have been thrown together so as to form an extensive lake, which has been further embellished with a bridge, boat-houses, and fishing-houses; but at the period of our history the valley was left in its wild natural state, and had an air of seclusion which gave it a charm almost as great as that possessed by the present ornamental lake. The high banks on either side were clothed with magnificent timber, and many trees grew so near the pools as to overshadow them.

Charles first beheld this exquisite scene from an elevation commanding the whole length of the valley, and the numerous sheets of water fringed by trees and glittering in the moonlight produced a truly magical effect, that filled him with rapture.

He halted for a short time to gaze at it, and while his eye wandered over the pool immediately beneath him he fancied he descried a boat stealing

along under the shadow of the trees on the further side of the pool, and pointed out the object to Trusty Dick, who was standing beside him.

"Your majesty is right," said Dick. "'Tis the fishing-boat belonging to the pool. I know it well—having often used it. There is only one person in it now—and that person, unless I am very much mistaken, is no other than the page Jasper. How say'st thou, William?" he added, appealing to his elder brother.

"I am of the same opinion," replied William. "I believe it to be Jasper."

"Oddsfish! this is strange!" exclaimed the king; "give him a signal that we are here."

Upon this, Trusty Dick descended the bank, and approaching the margin of the pool, gave a loud whistle.

The signal did not require to be repeated. In another moment the boat was seen to cross the pool, and now that the bright moonlight fell upon it there could be no doubt that its occupant was Jasper.


A few strokes of the oar brought the page to the spot where Trusty Dick was standing, and

with very little delay they mounted the bank together, and came to the king.

“How is it that I find you here?” cried Charles.
“Are you alone?”

“Quite alone, sire,” replied Jasper. “Major Careless and Father Huddleston have left me. But your majesty shall hear what has happened. Having been told that Colonel James and his troopers had left Chillington House, we were foolish enough to go thither, and found it in a terrible state, everything knocked to pieces by the rebel soldiers. While Major Careless and the priest went up-stairs to see what further damage had been done, I remained below, and being tired, presently fell asleep on a bench in the hall.

“I was awakened by a great noise in front of the house, and your majesty may conceive my fright when I found that a small detachment of troopers had just arrived. At this moment, I heard Major Careless call me, and not knowing what to do ran up the great staircase, but could find no one. Listening, I heard that the troopers had come in, so I did not dare to go down, but hid



myself in a closet, and did not quit it for some time, when finding all quiet, I stole forth, and descended by a back staircase. But this very nearly led to my capture, for some of the troopers were in the kitchen. Fortunately, they were eating and drinking at the time, and did not perceive me, so I hastily retreated and went up-stairs again as quietly as I could.

“ After this narrow escape I did not dare to make another attempt at flight, but wandered about among the deserted rooms during the rest of the day. Though I was tired to death of my confinement, I was not troubled by the troopers, for none of them came up-stairs, though I could hear them moving about below.

“ At length, to my great delight, it began to grow dark, and I hoped my hour of deliverance was at hand. Taking every precaution, I once more descended the back staircase, and approached the kitchen. No one was there. But the troopers had only just left, for I heard them ride out of the court-yard. On the table were the remains of their repast, and your majesty will not wonder that I picked up all the fragments I could find

when you consider that I had eaten nothing since I left Boscobel in the morning."

"I fear you made a very scanty meal," said Charles, compassionately.

"No, indeed; my liege, I got quite enough, and having satisfied my appetite, I quitted the house at the back, and very soon gained the park. Being totally unacquainted with the place I knew not which way to shape my course, and was afraid of losing myself, but I had heard Father Huddleston say that your majesty and your escort would be sure to pass through this part of the park, so I determined to look out for you.

"When I left Chillington House it was almost dark, but the moon had now risen, and revealed all the beauties of the scene. I wandered on insensibly till I came to this valley, when my further progress was checked by the pool, and I should have turned back had I not discovered a boat moored to the bank. I immediately availed myself of this mode of crossing, but I had only just got into the boat and begun to use the oars, when I heard sounds on the opposite bank that convinced me some persons were there. I hoped it might be

your majesty and your attendants, but not feeling quite sure, I thought it best to keep in the shade lest I might be caught in a trap. Your majesty knows the rest, and I have only to beg pardon for my long and tedious narration."

"You have had adventures enough to-day to last you your life," laughed Charles. "But we must not stop here longer. Get up behind me. My horse is somewhat rough, but he is strong enough to carry double."

"He has carried honest Humphrey and Mistress Jane Lane, so I think he will be able to carry me," replied Jasper.

And assisted by Trusty Dick, he sprang up behind the king. Robin's broad back afforded a very comfortable seat, and the page held on securely by the king's girdle.


Once more in motion, the little band, which had now got a slight addition to its numbers, took its way through the woods that hemmed in the long valley. Frequent glimpses were caught of the shining pools as they passed along, and so beautiful was this part of the park, that it was not without regret that Charles quitted it.

The park being enclosed by high pales, they had to make for a gate, and the nearest place of exit being on the Codsall side, they proceeded in that direction, and soon issued forth on a wide heath, which spread out for several miles.

The district that now lay before them was rendered exceedingly picturesque by its undulating surface, and by the patches of gorse that covered it. Here and there arose a knoll crowned with trees. On the right the heath extended to the little village of Codsall, but on this side, there was more wood. Before them, and reaching almost as far as Pendeford, whither they were bound, was a broad uncultivated tract, almost destitute of trees, yet not without a charm of its own.

Viewed, indeed, on a moonlight night like this, when its harsher features were subdued, and its beauties heightened, the heath presented a very lovely picture.

The night, however, was much too bright and fine for the king's escort, who would have preferred a sky covered with heavy black clouds, and not a star visible. They consulted together for a



few moments in a low tone, but did not communicate their fears to the king.

"Your attendants do not like crossing this moonlight heath, my liege," whispered the page.

"So I perceive," rejoined Charles. "Hark ye, my friends," he added to his guard; "we shall be very much exposed methinks, on this heath. Is there no other road?"

"None, my liege, without going too far about," rejoined William Penderel. "Yon clump of trees is our mark," he added, pointing to a distant eminence. "Those trees are not far from Moseley Old Hall. Heaven grant we may get there in safety!"

They then set off across the heath, and the stalwart brothers marched on as blithely as if they had felt no apprehension. Charles, too, appeared unconcerned, though it may be doubted whether he was not more uneasy than his guards; but the page gazed timorously around, expecting every instant to behold a party of the enemy start up from the furze bushes.

CHAPTER V.

BY WHAT DEVICE THE KING ESCAPED BEING CAPTURED BY
COLONEL ASHENHURST.

IF the king and his escort formed a very striking picture while involved in the forest, the little band looked infinitely more picturesque as they wended their way across the heath. They had begun to dismiss their fears, when, on a sudden, the greatest consternation was caused by the appearance of a detachment of troopers advancing towards them.

The detachment, which seemed to consist of about a dozen men, with an officer at their head, was about half a mile off, and had hitherto been concealed from view by the inequality of the

ground. It was now in full sight, and it became clear from the accelerated pace of the enemy that they themselves were perceived.

What was to be done? Retreat was out of the question, for they were certain to be pursued and captured. They must prove their valour in the defence of the king.

At this anxious moment the ready-witted page called out :

“Fighting is useless against such odds. We must resort to stratagem. Listen to me, loyal foresters. For a short time you must become rascally Roundheads. Pretend you have taken a couple of prisoners—the prisoners to be represented by his majesty and myself. Furthermore, give it out that we are both badly wounded. Do you understand?”

“Ay, we understand well enough,” replied Trusty Dick, “and ’tis to be hoped the rogues will believe we are brother rogues, and let us pass. After all, we can but fight it out. But what says your majesty?”

“I like the plan,” said the king. “With a little management I doubt not we shall be able to

impose upon the rascals. But we must lose no time in preparation. This morning my nose bled profusely. I looked upon it then as a bad omen, but now I regard the matter differently."

And as he spoke, he bound his bloodstained kerchief round his brows, so as to give himself the appearance of a wounded man.

Jasper at the same time tied a kerchief round his left arm, and both put on the appearance of great exhaustion—Charles allowing his head to droop upon his breast.

"Now march on boldly, brothers," said the elder Penderel. "All will depend upon our firmness."

As they went on, William and Trusty Dick kept close to the supposed prisoners.

Presently the detachment came up.

Drawing up his men so as to bar the way, the officer called out in a loud authoritative voice :

"Halt ! and give an account of yourselves. Are you good and true men?"

"Good and true men, and friends of the Commonwealth," replied John Penderel, boldly.

"Heaven pardon me for the lie," he muttered.

"So far well," said the officer. "But who have you got with you on horseback?"

"A wounded malignant and his servant, who is likewise wounded," replied Humphrey. "The Cavalier is disguised in the garb of a forester, as you see, but he could not 'scape us."

"Where are you conveying the prisoners?" demanded the officer.

"We are taking them to Codsall, and shall deliver them to Colonel Ashenhurst."

"I am Colonel Ashenhurst," replied the officer.

Taken aback by the answer, the sturdy miller did not know what to say. But William Penderel came to his relief.

"Shall we deliver the prisoners to you here, colonel?" he said, "or shall we take them on to Codsall? Since we have come thus far, it matters not if we go a little further. We have been to Chillington House, but did not find Colonel James there."

"Colonel James hath just changed his quarters, and is gone to Brewood," replied Ashenhurst. "Is the chief prisoner badly hurt?"

"He is wounded in the head," rejoined William Penderel. "I do not think he can live long."

"Nay, then, take him and his attendant to Codsall," said Colonel Ashenhurst. "I have other business on hand, and do not desire to go back. I trust to make an important capture before morn. A couple of my men shall go with you, if you desire it, but I cannot very well spare them."

"I thank your honour—but we do not require them," replied William Penderel.

"You will find a physician at Codsall, who will attend to the wounded malignant," continued Colonel Ashenhurst.

"I don't think any physician will do him much good," said Humphrey, unable to resist the jest. "Your honour is scarcely likely to find him—alive, I mean—on your return."

Colonel Ashenhurst did not hear the remark. He had no suspicion whatever of the trick played him, and ordered his men to ride on, gladdening the hearts of the stalwart brothers by his departure.

"I owe my preservation to you, Jasper," said Charles, as he removed the kerchief from his brow.

"Ay, but for this stratagem your majesty might have been captured," remarked Trusty Dick. "I tremble to think of it."

"You have something more to do, Dick," said Jasper. "You must invent some probable story to account for your not delivering the prisoners at Codsall."

"True," cried Charles. "I fear you may suffer on my account."

"Think not of us," said Trusty Dick. "We must take our chance. 'Tis sufficient that your majesty has escaped."

The road to Codsall lay on the right, but Charles and his companions had no intention of taking it, even as a feint, for Colonel Ashenhurst and his troop were already out of sight. Though anticipating no further danger, they quickened their pace, and soon reached Long Birch.

The portion of the heath they now entered on was wilder than that which they had previously traversed, but there was a tolerably good road across it, and this eventually brought them to the banks of the little river Penk.

About half a mile lower down, this stream

turned a mill, and the party now proceeded in that direction, it having been previously arranged that the king should dismount at Pendeford Mill, as it was called, and perform the rest of the journey on foot, and attended only by half his escort, so that his arrival at Moseley Old Hall might not be discovered.

As he was here obliged to part with Jasper, Humphrey Penderel undertook to find the page a secure place of refuge at the mill.

"I know Timothy Croft, the miller, and his wife to be good, honest folks," said Humphrey. "The youth will be perfectly safe with them."

"I will tell Major Careless where he may find thee," said the king to Jasper, "and no doubt thou wilt see him ere long. Thou hast done me good service, and I shall not be unmindful of it. Adieu!"

He then gave him his hand, and the page pressed it devotedly to his lips.

The three persons chosen to attend the king were William, Trusty Dick, and John, and having bidden a kindly farewell to the others, his majesty set off with his guard.

He had not gone far, however, when, turning his head, he saw those he had left standing together, and looking very sad, whereupon he hurried back, and said a few more gracious words to them. His majesty felt that he could not sufficiently thank the brave men who had hazarded their lives for him without fee or reward.

Moseley Old Hall was about two miles from Pendeford Mill, and the heath having been left behind since they had crossed the Penk, the whole aspect of the country had changed, and the road led through narrow green lanes shaded with trees.

Now and then they passed a quiet homestead, surrounded by orchards, or a cottage, and occasionally heard the barking of a dog, but with these exceptions the whole region seemed buried in slumber.

At length, after a quick walk of rather more than half an hour, they came in sight of an ancient mansion, somewhat resembling Boscobel, but larger and loftier, and far more imposing in appearance.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW THE KING BADE FAREWELL TO THE PENDERELS ; AND
HOW HIS MAJESTY WAS RECEIVED BY MR. THOMAS WHIT-
GREAVE OF MOSELEY OLD HALL.

MOSELEY OLD HALL, which we rejoice to say belongs to a direct descendant of the zealous Roman Catholic gentleman who owned it at the period of our story, is one of those charming and picturesque black and white houses that date back to the middle of the sixteenth century, when our old English architecture was in its perfection, and delights the eye with its irregular frontage, its numerous gables, bay windows, projections, and huge stacks of chimneys.

Even now there is an air of seclusion about

Moseley Old Hall, but at the period of which we treat, it was almost surrounded by trees, and though there were one or two habitations near it—much nearer than its owner liked—it had a look of extreme privacy.

The house was large, and contained numerous apartments of all sizes. Indeed, it contained some rooms that were never seen by all its inmates, though it was whispered about among the servants that there were closed up passages leading no one knew whither—perhaps to vaults, secret chambers, and secret closets.

These rumours were not altogether unfounded. Like their friends and neighbours the Giffards, the Whitgreaves had adhered firmly to the old religion, and, like them, had found it necessary to contrive hiding-places for priests and recusants. Many such existed at Moseley Old Hall, and some are still extant.

Descended from an ancient Staffordshire family, who had dwelt at Burton, Thomas Whitgreave, owner of Moseley Old Hall, in 1651, had served during the early part of the Civil Wars under Captain Thomas Giffard, and had distinguished

himself for his bravery; but having received a severe wound, from which he was some time in recovering, he retired to his old family mansion, and took no further part in the struggle. Still, his zeal for the cause of monarchy was ardent as ever, and his sympathies being entirely for the young king, he was deeply afflicted by the disastrous result of the Battle of Worcester.

Thomas Whitgreave was still young—at all events, he was not more than thirty-five—tall, and handsome, with a grave but kindly expression of countenance. At the time he received the king, he was unmarried, but his mother, a remarkable old lady, resided with him. Mrs. Whitgreave was as staunch a Royalist as her son, and daily invoked Heaven's vengeance upon the regicide Cromwell.

Mr. Whitgreave kept up a good establishment, though not a large retinue of servants. His domestic chaplain was Father Huddlestone, and he behaved with the greatest consideration to the good priest, not only assigning him rooms for study and devotion, but allowing him to take a couple of pupils. Father Huddlestone was very

useful in the house, and, without being meddlesome, exercised a beneficial influence over the family. Mrs. Whitgreave was a devotee, and as scrupulous in the performance of her religious duties as if she had belonged to a convent. A chaplain, therefore, was a necessity to her, and no one could have better discharged the sacred office than Father Huddleston. Not only did the good priest improve the household by his councils, but his society was extremely agreeable to the master of the house.

Such was the constitution of Moseley Old Hall at the time when the fugitive king was received within it.

Among the Roman Catholic gentry of the period, all of whom were Royalists, there was necessarily a good deal of private communication, conducted chiefly through the medium of the priests. Thus secret intelligence was conveyed to Father Huddleston of the king's arrival at White Ladies, and it was through Father Huddleston that John Penderel was enabled to secure a place of refuge for Lord Wilmot. It was from the same quarter that the fugitive king's movements

were first made known to the good priest and his patron.

Every preparation had been made at Moseley Old Hall so that the king could be got into the house secretly.

It being now past midnight, all the servants had long since retired to rest. Four persons only were on the alert. These were Lord Wilmot, who remained in his bedchamber; Father Huddleston, who was stationed in a close, called the Moore, adjoining the mansion; Mr. Whitgreave, who had repaired to another close, called Allport's Leasow, and concealed himself in a dry pit, covered with trees; and Major Careless, who was watching for the king and his companions at the entrance of a long lime-tree walk that led to the ancient mansion.

Careless had to wait there more than an hour, but at length was rewarded by the appearance of the party, and satisfied that he could not be mistaken, went forth to meet them.

A cordial greeting passed between Charles and his favourite, and the latter heartily congratulated his majesty on his safe arrival.

"I had begun to feel somewhat uneasy," he said. "But I knew your majesty was well guarded."

"Truly, I have been well guarded," said Charles, looking gratefully at his attendants. "But thou wilt be astonished to hear that we have had an encounter with Colonel Ashenhurst. We owe our escape to a device of that clever little page, Jasper."

"What do I hear?" cried Careless. "Has your majesty seen Jasper?"

"I have only just parted with him," replied Charles. "Nay, do not trouble yourself. He is safe enough. I left him at Pendeford Mill."

"This is good news, indeed!" cried Careless, joyfully.

"I knew it would delight thee," said Charles, smiling. "But let us to the house. Art thou appointed to do the honours?"

"Mr. Whitgreave is at hand," replied Careless. "If your majesty will be pleased to walk on a little further, I will present him to you. You will find him a most excellent host."

They then marched quickly along the lime-tree

walk, until they came to the close which we have said was designated Allport's Leasow.

Here Careless gave the signal agreed upon, and Mr. Whitgreave, who had passed a very anxious hour in the dry pit, immediately issued forth from it.

"Do not present him," said the king, in a low voice, as his host approached. "I should like to see whether he will recognise me."

For a moment or two, Mr. Whitgreave was perplexed.

With the exception of Careless all the group were habited alike in foresters' attire, but the stalwart Penderels were not to be mistaken, so after a second survey Mr. Whitgreave no longer hesitated, but threw himself at the feet of the right person, exclaiming :

"This, I am certain, is my royal master."

"You are right, Mr. Whitgreave," rejoined Charles, giving him his hand to kiss. "But oddsfish! I should not have been offended if you had not known me in this garb—though I cannot be ashamed of it, since it is worn by such brave and faithful fellows as these, who have protected

me at the hazard of their lives. May I never want such defenders as you and your brothers!" he added, to William Penderel.

"We have simply done our duty, my liege," replied William.

"If others do their duty as well, I shall have reason to be thankful," said Charles, earnestly. "Mr. Whitgreave," he added, "you will excuse me, but since I must now part with these faithful men, I must tell them what I feel in your hearing—and in your hearing too, father," he continued, as the good priest, who having become aware of the king's arrival, had come up. "To all the brothers Penderel I owe much, but to the courage and fidelity of William and Trusty Dick I undoubtedly owe my preservation. Let what I now say be remembered, and repeated to me hereafter, should the great services they have rendered me be inadequately requited when I have the power to requite them. Farewell, my good and faithful friends!" he continued, with an emotion that he did not seek to repress. "Farewell!"

"Must we quit you, my liege?" cried Trusty

Dick. "We will quit our homes and all dear to us to follow your majesty's fortunes."

"It cannot be," rejoined Charles. "I am fully sensible of your devotion, but we must part. You would only be a hindrance to me. Farewell ! farewell !"

And he stretched out his hand, which the stalwart brothers seized and pressed to their lips.

"Mr. Whitgreave," he added, "you will take care of these brave men."

"They shall have the best the buttery can afford, my liege," replied Whitgreave. "And I will attend to them myself, as I must needs do, seeing that all my servants are abed. Father Huddlestone will conduct your majesty to the house."

Bestowing a last look at the three stalwart brothers, who seemed greatly dejected, Charles, accompanied by Careless, followed Father Huddlestone to the house.

Entering at the rear of the mansion, Father Huddlestone took the king and Careless up a back staircase with cautious steps, and as they

neared the summit they perceived a dark figure retreating noiselessly down a passage.

Aware that this was Lord Wilmot, Charles kept silence till he had entered his lordship's room, which was situated at the end of the passage, and he then gave utterance to his satisfaction.

Lord Wilmot, as the reader is aware, was a special favourite of the king, and his majesty had more dependence upon him than upon any one else, save Careless. Lord Wilmot must not be confounded with his son, the dissolute Earl of Rochester, who figured some years afterwards at the court of the Merry Monarch. A brave, chivalrous nobleman, he was able to act as a sort of Mentor to the king.

Lord Wilmot had, in fact, belonged to the court of Charles I., and had acquired the grave manners of that period. Tall and strongly built, he had handsome, expressive features. The Earl of Rochester, as is well known, could successfully counterfeit any part he pleased, but he did not inherit his talent any more than his vices from

his father, who could never be prevailed upon to assume a disguise, declaring that, if he did so, he should infallibly be found out.

Seeing that the king looked much fatigued with his journey, Lord Wilmot besought him to postpone all conversation till he had taken some refreshment, and opening a cupboard his lordship produced some cates and a flask of canary.

Charles sat down, and emptying a goblet of generous wine, insisted upon all the others following his example, and while they were doing so a gentle tap was heard at the door, which was opened by Father Huddlestone, and Mr. Whitgreave came in.

"What of my faithful attendants—the Penderels?" cried the king. "Have they been well cared for? Pardon the question, Mr. Whitgreave. I am sure they have."

"They are gone, my liege," replied Whitgreave. "And I must say that I never saw men more grieved to part with a master than these loyal-hearted fellows are to quit your majesty."

"Say you sooth?" cried Charles.

"Your majesty shall judge," replied Whitgreave.

"I took them to the buttery, where I have often seen each and all of them make a hearty meal, and where there was plenty of cold meat, and bade them fall to and spare not. They declined. And when I pressed them further, saying they would discredit my house if they went away without supper, they said they had no appetite. 'No appetite!' I exclaimed. 'How is this?' But I soon found out what was the matter. Each honest heart was full, and wanted relief. A single morsel of meat would have choked any one of them. However, they drank a cup of ale to your majesty's health."

"And they are gone?" cried Charles. "I should have liked to see their honest faces once more."

"Your majesty knows where to find them. Should you again require their services," said Mr. Whitgreave. "And I am sure nothing will delight them more than to have another opportunity of proving their fidelity."

But circumstances, as will be seen as we proceed with our narrative, did not allow Charles to employ any one of the stalwart brothers again

Their part in our story is played. Yet before dismissing them, we would express our genuine admiration of the loyal men we have endeavoured to depict. In describing them we have not gone beyond the truth ; nor endowed them with heroic qualities they did not possess. The Penderel brothers were men of unwavering loyalty, brave as faithful, and possessed of such extraordinary strength as rendered them truly formidable antagonists. Fortunately, they were not called upon to display their valour in action. Had they been required to defend the king from an attack during the nocturnal ride from Boscobel to Moseley Old Hall, which we have just described, it is certain they would have done tremendous execution upon his foes, and have delivered him, or died in his defence. That their loyal hearts could not harbour a thought of treason, or quail before peril, we have shown. Their devotion to the fugitive monarch, and the important services they rendered him in his hour of need, have gained them a page in England's history. Very pleasant has it been to chronicle their actions, and we part from them with regret.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW THE KING WAS PRESENTED TO MRS. WHITGREAVE.

THOUGH the night was now far spent, and he had undergone great fatigue, Charles felt so happy in the society of Lord Wilmot and the others, that he was unwilling to retire to rest, and remained for some time in conversation with the party. Not before three o'clock in the morning, did he ask his host where he was to sleep.

Mr. Whitgreave conducted him to a large chamber panelled with black oak, in which stood an old-fashioned bedstead, with heavy furniture, and a carved canopy almost touching the ceiling.

While looking at this large comfortable bed, Charles feared Mr. Whitgreave would tell him that his safety demanded that he should sleep in some secret closet; but no such suggestion was made.

"I am delighted with my room," said the king to his host; "but where are the hiding-places? I should like to see them, in case an emergency should arise."

"I intended to show them to you to-morrow, my liege," replied Mr. Whitgreave. "But you shall see them at once."

With this he led the king along a narrow passage to another chamber, in which there was a small bed.

"This is my room," said Careless, who accompanied them. "But I am quite ready to give it up to your majesty, should you prefer it to the large oak chamber you have just seen."

"I have no such desire," rejoined Charles.

"Wait till you have seen the arrangements, my liege," said Careless.

"This room has a false floor, my liege," he said, "and beneath is a narrow passage leading

to the ground floor by the brewhouse chimney. But this I will more fully explain to your majesty on the morrow."

"Enough," replied Charles. "I am quite content with what I have seen. I shall now sleep soundly."

He then returned to the oak chamber, and his recent privations made him greatly enjoy the luxury of the large and comfortable bed.

Every possible precaution was taken by Mr. Whitgreave and Father Huddleston to prevent any of the household from obtaining sight of the king. The servants were given to understand that a fugitive Cavalier had arrived at the house during the night, and was lodged in the oak bed-chamber, but they believed him to be a relative of their master, and had no suspicion whatever of the truth.

Charles slept very soundly in his large and comfortable bed, and when he awoke he found Careless watching beside him. After the customary morning salutations had passed between them, Careless pointed to a rich velvet suit spread out on a fauteuil, and said :

"I pray your majesty to look at these habiliments. Your worthy host hopes you will deign to wear them during your stay at Moseley Hall."

"Faith! I am infinitely obliged by the attention," replied Charles. "Pray is Mr. Whitgreave married?"

"Not yet, sire," replied Careless. "But his mother resides with him, and Father Huddleston tells me the old lady is wonderfully anxious to be presented to your majesty."

"Oddsfish! she must be content to see me in my peasant's costume," said Charles. "Had she been young and fair I might have put on that rich suit to please her. I shall only require some clean linen."

"A shirt is already provided for you, sire, as you perceive," replied Careless.

"'Sdeath! I can never wear that fine shirt," cried Charles. "The laced ruffles would betray me at once."

"Well, here is a country noggen shirt, with coarse hosen to match. Do they please you, sire?"

"The noggen shirt and rough hose will suit me

exactly," said the king. "As a punishment for tempting me with fine linen, thou shalt help to resume my disguise."

"Willingly, sire. I am here for the purpose of helping you to make your toilette."

Once more habited in his forester's dress, to which he had now become accustomed, Charles was cautiously conducted by Careless to the library, where he found Lord Wilmot, with his host and Father Huddleston.

His majesty was received with more ceremony than he liked, and he put an end to it by sitting down to the breakfast prepared for him, and begging the others to join him. They excused themselves, alleging that they had already breakfasted, but Careless having no such excuse to offer, obeyed without the slightest hesitation. The king, however, could not prevent his host and Father Huddleston from serving him.

Charles was in very good spirits, chatted familiarly with every one present, and seemed to make light of all difficulties and dangers. Mr. Whitgreave was quite surprised by his cheerfulness, and could not help expressing admiration at the

manner in which his majesty bore his misfortunes.

"I never suffer myself to be cast down," said the king. "And I have hitherto found my courage rise in proportion to the dangers by which I have been surrounded."

"With the spirit you possess, my liege, and with Heaven's support," observed Father Huddestone, who was standing by, "you cannot fail to overcome all difficulties, and must regain the throne."

"I trust your prediction will be fulfilled, father," replied Charles. "I can afford to wait. After the failure of my great enterprise, nothing more can be done in England at present. Another army cannot be raised. My object, as you are aware, is to reach the coast and embark for France. But I am environed by enemies."

"This reminds me, sire," said Whitgreave, "that my mother has just received a message, brought by a faithful emissary from Bentley House, which it may import you to hear, as I think it concerns your majesty."

"I must chide you for not presenting your

mother to me ere this, Mr. Whitgreave," said Charles. "It will delight me to see her."

"The omission shall be repaired at once, sire," replied Whitgreave.

Making an obeisance, he quitted the library, and presently returned with a tall elderly dame, who had still to some extent preserved her good looks.

Mr. Whitgreave led his mother by the hand towards the king, who saluted her very graciously and prevented her from kneeling, telling her with many kind expressions how much he was indebted to her son for receiving him at this perilous juncture.

"Ah, sire," she exclaimed, "my son and myself are only too proud to receive you, and would sacrifice our lives to accomplish your deliverance. Jane Lane, who is devoted to your majesty, and whom I love dearly as a daughter, has just sent a message to me to say that her brother has obtained a pass from Captain Stone, governor of Stafford, for herself and a groom to go into the west."

And she paused.

"Well, madam, what more?" asked Charles.

"I scarcely dare venture to propose that your majesty should perform the part of a groom, yet seeing you in this garb——"

"Hesitate not to make the suggestion, madam," interrupted the king. "So far from regarding it as a degradation, I shall be delighted to act as Jane Lane's groom. The proposal meets my wishes exactly, and seems to offer me the chance I so eagerly desire of reaching the coast. What sort of person is Captain Stone?"

"A fierce Parliamentary," replied Whitgreave. "I have reason to remember him. At the conclusion of the Civil Wars he came hither in quest of me, and searched the house most rigorously. But I had taken refuge in one of the hiding-places, and escaped his vigilance."

"The circumstance you mention not only illustrates Captain Stone's character, but proves the security of the hiding-place," observed Charles. He then turned to Lord Wilmot, and said, "It strikes me very forcibly, Wilmot, that this pass must have been procured for you."

"Very likely, Colonel Lane obtained it for me,"

was the reply. "But I gladly resign it to your majesty."

"Nay, I cannot take your place," said the king.

"You will deeply hurt me by a refusal, sire," said Lord Wilmot. "And now a word to you, Mr. Whitgreave, and I beg your particular attention to what I am about to say. Should any search be made by the rebels for the king while I am in your house, I desire that I may be given up, in order to divert them from his majesty."

"I have not been consulted, Mr. Whitgreave," said Charles. "And I peremptorily forbid you to act as directed by Lord Wilmot. Let no more be said on the subject."

Mr. Whitgreave bowed.

At this juncture, Mrs. Whitgreave, fancying she might be in the way, craved permission to retire, and made a profound obeisance to the king, who conducted her to the door.

CHAPTER VIII.

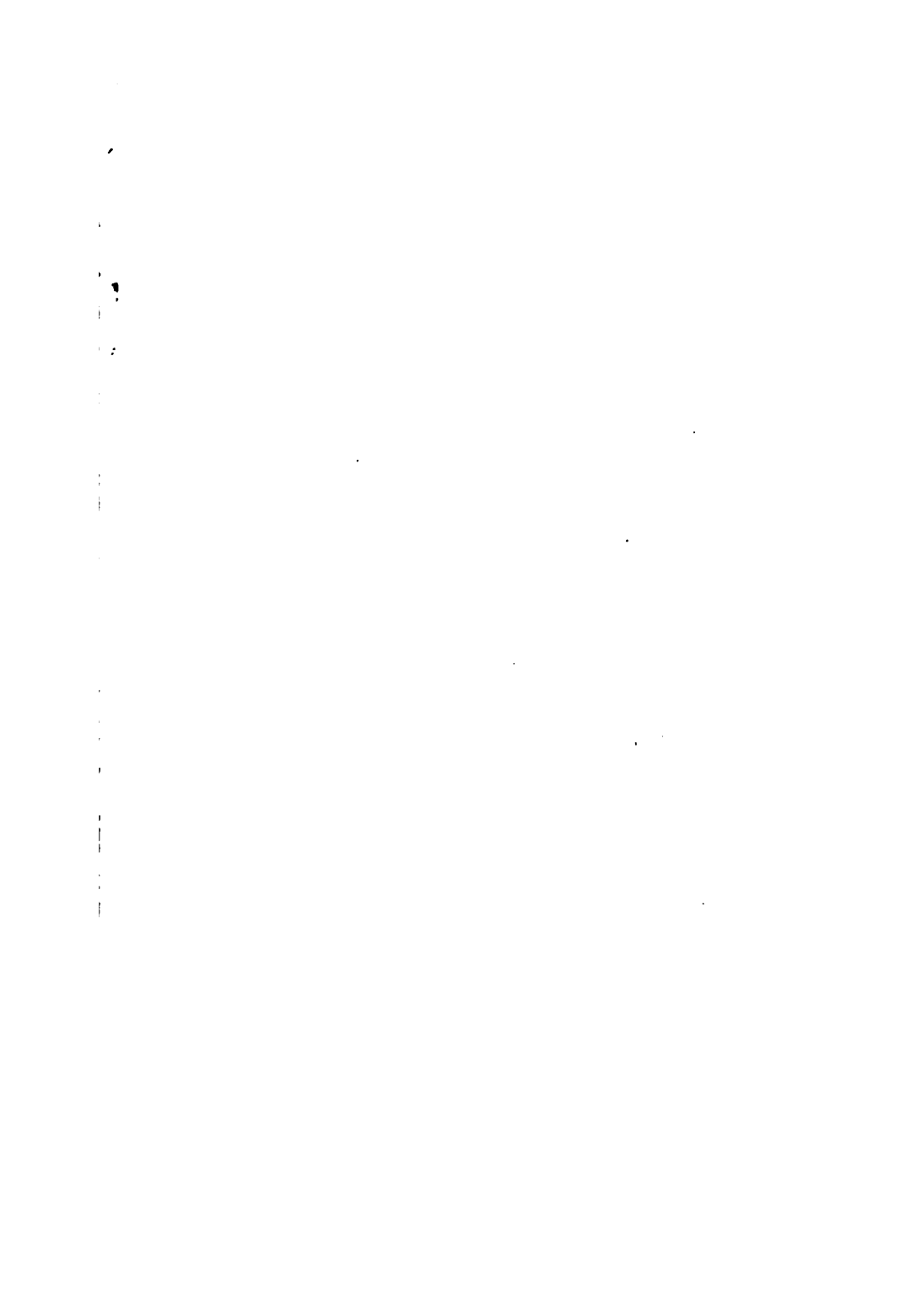
HOW TWO SPIES CAME BY NIGHT TO MOSELEY OLD HALL.

"I HAVE a suggestion to make, my liege," said Lord Wilmot, as Charles came back. "On consideration, I think it will be best that I should proceed to Bentley House at once. There I can be of use to your majesty, whereas my presence here rather tends to imperil you. Major Careless can accompany me, if he pleases, and return to let you know when Mistress Jane Lane is ready to set forth on her journey."

"Good," replied the king. "Does Lord Wilmot's proposition meet with your approval?" he added to Careless.



MOSELEY HALL.



"Perfectly," was the reply. "If your majesty can dispense with my personal services during your sojourn here, I think I can be better employed in acting as a messenger. If I should unluckily fall into the enemy's hands, they will get little out of me. Moreover, if the rogues should get on your track, I will engage to mislead them."

"I have every reliance upon thee," said Charles. "But, faith! I shall be sorry to lose thee."

Almost immediately after the conference just described, his majesty repaired with his attendants to the room above the porch, the latticed windows of which commanded the approach to the house, and of course a sharp look out was kept, but the only persons who came near the place were some wounded soldiers, one of whom Charles recognised as belonging to his own guard, and it distressed him exceedingly that he could not speak with the poor fellow. Mr. Whitgreave, however, and Father Huddlestone gave the men relief, but did not dare to invite them into the house.

About this time Careless disappeared, and was not seen again for two or three hours. When an opportunity occurred, the king questioned him as to the cause of his absence, and Careless owned that he had been at Pendeford Mill, but had not seen Jasper. The page was gone. He had departed early in the morning, the miller said, without mentioning whither he was going.

“You need not be uneasy about him,” remarked Charles with a laugh. “He is born under a lucky star, and like myself, as I hope and believe, will escape his enemies. Very probably, you will hear of him at Bentley House.”

Careless thought so too, and though disappointed, did not allow himself to be cast down.

No troopers were seen that day, but Careless was able to account for their non-appearance, Croft, the miller, having informed him that the patrols had gone in a different direction, and he added a distressing piece of intelligence, to the effect that Colonel Ashenhurst had paid a visit to Boscobel House, and allowed his men to plunder it.


The king, with Lord Wilmot and Careless,

dined in the library, where they were less liable to observation than they would have been in any other room. No servants were present, and Mr. Whitgreave and Father Huddlestone again waited on his majesty.

As soon as the household had retired to rest, Lord Wilmot and Careless took leave of the king, and were conducted by Father Huddlestone to the close called Allport's Leasow, where they found Mr. Whitgreave with a couple of steeds, ready saddled and bridled.

Mounting without a moment's loss of time, they bade him and Father Huddlestone good night, and rode off very quietly, till they were far enough from the house, as they judged, to accelerate their pace with safety. They then galloped off in the direction of Bentley House.

After their departure the king remained for some time alone in the room over the porch. Not daring to burn a light, he could not read, and having no inclination for slumber, he was obliged to occupy himself with his own thoughts, and having much to meditate upon, he fell into a deep reverie.



At last he roused himself, and finding that the moon had arisen in the interim, moved towards the lattice window, and gazed at the lovely scene without.

Seen by moonlight, the picturesque old mansion had a most charming effect, but only certain portions of it were visible from the projecting window at which he stood, and he had surveyed with admiration all that came within his ken, when his eye was caught by a glittering steel cap which could just be seen above the garden wall.

A mounted trooper, it appeared, had raised himself in the saddle, and was peering inquisitively at the house.

More careful examination showed the king that the trooper had a comrade with him, the latter being on foot, and armed with a carabine.

Even at that distance, and by that light, Charles recognised the foremost trooper. The man's features were too marked to be mistaken; and, besides, circumstances had fixed them on his memory. It was Madmannah. And Charles did not for a moment doubt that the other was Ezra. Like bloodhounds these two men seemed ever on

his track, and the dread that they might hunt him down at last, for a moment shook him.

At this moment the door was softly opened, and Father Huddleston came in.

"I came to warn your majesty," he said. "But I find you have discovered those two spies."

"Yes, I see them plainly enough," replied the king. "And I can tell you something about them, father, that you would hardly guess. Those are the two rogues who tried to capture me in the oak."

"Is it possible, sire?" exclaimed the priest. "They will fail as they did then. The saints who have your majesty in their guard will thwart their evil designs. Mr. Whitgreave, being somewhat fatigued, has retired to rest. But he bade me call him on the instant if any danger threatened. I will do so now."

"Stay an instant, father," said the king. "I am unwilling to disturb him without cause. I think those two spies are only reconnoitring the house, and do not design to attempt an entrance now."

"Oh! the treacherous villains!" cried Father

Huddlestone. "Were I to point them out to my patron, he would fire upon them and destroy them."

"Then do not wake him," said Charles. "I see no cause for apprehension. Look! they are marching off."

"Truly, they are moving, sire, but they have not finished their survey. Having examined the front, they are going to the back of the house."

"You are right, father," replied Charles.

End of Book the Fourth.

END OF VOL. II.

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